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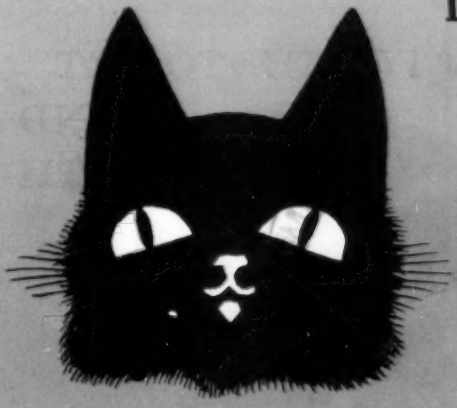

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THE SHORTSTORY PUBLISHING COMPANY 41-47 Pearl Street, Boston, Massachusetts
322 Regent Street, London, W., England

Vol. XV., No. 12. Whole No. 180.

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FOR THE TOILET
AND
BATH

FOR
HOUSEWORK

Two Soaps with but a Single Thought—

"CLEANLINESS"

CLB220308

The Black Cat

A Monthly Magazine of Original Short Stories.

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Vol. XV., No. 12.
Whole No., 180.

SEPTEMBER, 1910.

10 cents a copy
$1.00 a year.

Entered at the Post-Office at Boston, Mass., as second-class matter.

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The White Lord of Krishnabad.*

BY MICHAEL WHITE.

PERHAPS Govind Mitra, the old Brahmin, can explain this matter, but it remains incomprehensible to the former Miss Carlton of Baltimore, to her traveling companion, Mrs. Banks, and also to Spencer, at one time American Vice-Consul at Bombay. It began shortly after Miss Carlton had landed on "India's mystic shore." Being in need of assistance she naturally sought the American Consulate. There a portly *babu* (clerk) conducted her to the airy office of Spencer, the young Vice-Consul, to whose duties was attached that of straightening out the difficulties of his traveling fellow citizens.

"Mr. Spencer, I believe," began Miss Carlton.

Spencer bowed and invited the two ladies to comfortable cane chairs. Then he smiled pleasantly, for it was some time since such a typically fresh American girl had crossed the threshold of his office. Subconsciously she recalled to mind an Easter parade on Fifth Avenue, which was far removed from the pale if not sallow procession of faces he met nightly at the band stand. One hot season in the plains will fade the rose tints from any complexion. Therefore he was all desire to assist her in recovering lost baggage, negotiating a draft, or any one of the usual tribulations of tourists.

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"Now, what is it I can do for you?" he requested.

"Well," she explained, "It is not a very difficult matter. We wish to visit Krishnabad, and we have been told that as it is a native state it would be advisable to obtain a letter of introduction from our consul to the Raja. We should then be given better attention."

"Krishnabad!" vaguely repeated Spencer. "Krishnabad! Pardon me, but may I ask why you wish to visit Krishnabad?"

"Is it not an interesting place?"

"Why, from what I have heard I should say it was rather the reverse. You see, Krishnabad lies away off the main line of travel in the Indian Desert. I guess it may possess the average temple and palace attractions, but you can undoubtedly see much finer at Jeypur and Agra without encountering so much physical discomfort. I am afraid you would find the accommodation for travelers at Krishnabad pretty much in the nature of roughing it."

She shot at him a challenging smile from under the broad brim of her hat.

"I can assure you we don't expect to find a Grand Hotel at Krishnabad," she remarked. "Besides I have roughed it before in our West."

"I understand," he inclined his head slightly, as he observed the athletic pose of her figure. "For all that I should advise you to cut out Krishnabad. It really isn't worth the extra discomfort, unless you have some special reason for visiting it."

Miss Carlton turned her eyes toward her companion, exchanged a mute signal, and nodded.

"Well, we have a particular reason. We wish to see the Greco-Buddhist rock sculptures at Krishnabad. I have made a study of Greek sculpture and would like to trace its influence on Hindu art. Have you not heard of the rock sculptures at Krishnabad?"

Spencer's brow grew a trifle puzzled. He certainly had never heard of the rock sculptures of Krishnabad, but hesitated to display his ignorance before a fellow countrywoman who had just set foot in a land upon which he was presumed to be well informed. Had she tackled him on indigo or rice the case would have been different, but rock sculptures do not figure conspicu-

ously in consular reports. He reached for a bulky volume of indexed general data on India, and turned up Greco-Buddhist sculptures. He found it was quite a lengthy subject, that there were fine collections of Greco-Buddhist relics in the museums of Lahore and Calcutta, and that among the places where such had been discovered those of Krishnabad were disputed. Fortified by this authority he ventured to suggest how much better it would be to look over the relics in the museums.

"But," persisted Miss Carlton, "it is to satisfy ourselves on the disputed point that we wish to visit Krishnabad. We believe that as Krishnabad lay in the path of the Greek invasion it is more than probable the rock sculptures there are of that origin."

Spencer felt that his most attractive young visitor was far too well posted on ancient history as applied to rock sculptures for him to prolong the contest with much hope of success. Still, without any definite reason, other perhaps than the remoteness and discomfort of Krishnabad, he was adverse to their plan. He was trying to think of some other point to urge when, glancing over his shoulder, he caught sight of a native clerk standing in an aperture with reed screen drawn partly aside.

"What do you want?" he demanded, tersely.

"Did not the consul sahib call?" the Native questioned.

"You know I didn't," retorted Spencer. "Jao! (Be off!)"

The Native slipped away and Spencer turned again to his visitors.

"You never can tell what these people are up to," he remarked. "Night and day they are always within earshot. But to come back to your trip to Krishnabad."

"Of course," said Miss Carlton, in a decisive manner. "If you do not care to give us the letter we must manage without it, as we intend to go to Krishnabad."

Spencer sat back in his chair before replying. Somehow he was against their visiting Krishnabad, but he understood the character of his countrywomen sufficiently to know that the reason for drawing them from a set purpose must be a stronger one than mere physical discomfort. And in this case he was not in possession of any serious deterrent facts. The district

of Krishnabad was in a fairly pacific condition, and American women had traveled in safety to far more remote places. But premonitions seem to float in the Indian atmosphere.

"Well," he said, at last, "of course you shall have the letter. I guess there is no reason why you should not go to Krishnabad."

So he wrote the letter on official note paper, requesting the far-famed hospitality and courtesy of his Highness, the Raja, on behalf of Miss Carlton and her traveling companion. In reality this merely signified the privilege to view such sights as there might be in Krishnabad, and to pay for the best accommodation obtainable.

"It's just as well to be careful," he remarked, as he handed Miss Carlton the letter. "I have not heard of any political unrest in Krishnabad, but I wouldn't stay there longer than necessary. It's a bit out of the way, you see, with the nearest British official at some distance. Suppose you wire me when you leave so that I may know you are all right."

"Oh, we can take care of ourselves," replied Miss Carlton, confidently.

"Yes, I know, but I'd like to have your decision on the — er — the Greco — "

"Buddhist," she added.

"Yes, Buddhist-Greco sculptures."

Miss Carlton smiled at his hazy inversion of the term, and promised to wire their opinion.

"By the way," he asked, "have you a trustworthy servant?"

"Oh, yes, I think so. We have secured one who has given satisfaction to some other American tourists."

"Good! And be sure you take plenty of wraps along. It gets pretty cold at night in January up country."

Miss Carlton and her companion had risen to leave when Spencer was prompted to offer a souvenir of their call at the consulate. As he rose also, he put out his hand and took from his desk a miniature gilded stone image with the body of a man and the head of an elephant. He offered it to Miss Carlton.

"As you are interested in sculpture please accept this as a talisman of good luck."

"What a queer little figure!" she exclaimed, evidently pleased with the gift. "Thank you so much."

"Not at all," he protested. "I don't know much about it, except that it's called Ganesha. It was given to me by an old Brahmin, Govind Mitra, in return for getting his son out of some trouble. I believe the image is held to possess some mysterious influence. In this case let us hope it will help you to a pleasant trip through India, and a safe return to the United States. Good by," he shook hands, "and don't forget to wire me in a few days when you leave Krishnabad."

He watched the retreating forms of Miss Carlton and her companion with head bent pensively and hands thrust deep in his pockets.

"Couldn't prevent their going to that place," he spoke to himself. "Neither is there any definite reason against it, but — somehow — I'd just as soon they had decided to cut out Krishnabad."

From Bombay north to Rampur Junction there is nothing to be said of Miss Carlton's trip, except that if Indian main line passenger comforts are not what they might be, they are a wonderful improvement on conditions not so long past. Peradventure some day you will not have to carry your bedding along, and dining cars will be a reality. But from Rampur Junction on into the Indian Desert by a branch line Spencer's prophecy of roughing it began to be fulfilled. Hour after hour the cars jolted and bumped over an arid plain, dust sifted in through the rattling windows, while the tinted panes gave to the parched landscape a sub-arctic appearance not in keeping with the noonday temperature.

At long intervals the train crawled into wayside stations, and then there was a riot of color and tongues. The third class became the object of attack by fierce-whiskered, swashbuckling-looking fellows, in brilliant turbans, fat white-robed babus, and lean hungry-appearing peasants, whose spindle props of limbs seemed incapable of supporting the light burden of their possessions. When the train moved on women screamed, children yelled, dogs howled, and frightful maledictions rose from the throats of those for whom there was apparently no room on the

"tee-rain." Miss Carlton and her companion felt sure the next one would be carried by assault, but where the people came from, or what they subsisted on, in that inhospitable region, remained to occupy their attention in an otherwise tedious journey.

At last toward sunset the train jolted into the station of Krishnabad. On alighting the two American women could see along a white stretch of sandy road for perhaps a mile to a collection of white-washed mud dwellings backed up against the foot of a precipitous rock. Perched on the rock, and viewing the plain with defiance, the age-worn battlements of the palace stood out against a pale blue sky. Mud dwellings, rock, and palace were all bathed a golden rose as the red ball of the sun drew near the horizon.

They had telegraphed ahead for accommodation at the dak bungalow (traveler's rest), and a hack in the shape of a queer two-wheeled cart with faded embroidered curtains and a gilt fringed canopy was waiting. Such style as it had formerly possessed was further diminished by its being attached for the most part with string to an unkempt pony. As there remained time before darkness set in for a first glimpse of the rock sculptures, Miss Carlton gave directions to be taken to that spot. They had struggled into the body of the cart, but the driver seemed to hesitate before climbing to his perch just over the horse's tail.

"What are you waiting for?" demanded Miss Carlton.

"Mem, sahib," replied the driver. "It is for the White Lord."

"What White Lord?" questioned Miss Carlton, glancing around. "I don't see any white man."

"Neither do I," acquiesced her companion.

"Go on at once," ordered Miss Carlton. "No other white person got off the train with us."

The driver grunted as he whipped up the pony, disentangled his outfit from a string of camels, and plunged into a whirling cloud of dust. When they shook off the dust cloud they had drawn near to the towering rock, now suffused a deep purple with the rapidly changing shades of oncoming night. Presently the driver pulled up before the sculptured facade of a rock temple,

its interior of massive columns sinking away into the obscurity of darkness. The sculptures of the façade looked down fantastically, among them figures of Ganesha, the elephant divinity. Whether Ganesha would have decided the question of Greco-Buddhist origin to Miss Carlton's satisfaction must be left doubtful, for the driver protested that the place was haunted by evil spirits after dark and even the unkempt pony seemed nervous. By daylight and with a guide provided by the Raja's courtesy the sculptures could be examined more thoroughly. But Ganesha was working along different lines, as was to be proved by daylight. In the meantime the cart had been driven off at a rattling pace. Skirting the city, enveloped in the pungent smoke and chill blue mist of nightfall, the cart was finally jerked into a flagged courtyard, about whose sides were grouped ruinous buildings which seemed of vast extent.

"What place is this?" questioned Miss Carlton, surveying the scene with wonder mixed with uncertainty.

"This, mem, sahib, is the dak bungalow. It was once a palace so your ladyships will be very comfortable here."

Then he went and banged on a door, while Miss Carlton and her companion expressed their doubt about the promise of comfort. At any rate the American ladyships did not feel inclined to apply the term cozy to a few acres of crumbling walls and roofs. Presently the door was opened by the khansamah (keeper), a tottering gray-bearded old man, holding a lantern. He led his guests into the great hall which had probably been at one time an audience chamber. But a table and chairs in the centre had transformed it into about as appropriate a dining-room for lone travelers as the Concourse of the Grand Central, minus the illuminations. Adjoining this the khansamah pointed out another cavern-like chamber for a sleeping-room, with more halls leading into black uncertainty beyond. By daylight the ornate roof carving might have been a subject for admiration, but with the chill air drifting in through the delicate marble fretwork of the windows, to cast dancing shadows from spluttering candles, the place seemed to possess a mausoleum atmosphere. It was then the discovery was made that the faithful man-servant had disappeared, had in fact not been seen since they left the railway station.

"Well, we have plenty of room at any rate," remarked Miss Carlton, with an effort to be cheerful.

"I hope we shall not be compelled to spend another night in this place," replied Mrs. Banks with a shiver.

The actions of the old khansamah next drew their attention. In laying the table he had set three places.

"You have some one else staying here, then?" interrogated Miss Carlton.

The old man raised his bushy eyebrows in mild surprise.

"For the White Lord, mem, sahib."

"The White Lord! What White Lord?" she further questioned, as she recalled the incident on leaving the railway station.

But the khansamah's English could not apparently run to further explanation. Muttering in an undertone he tottered away into the unknown for the supper dishes. Miss Carlton and her companion stared at each other.

"The White Lord, whoever he is, seems to be a very intangible kind of person," remarked Miss Carlton.

Mrs. Banks surveyed the illimitable dark spaces askance.

"I am beginning to think," she said, "that young Mr. Spencer was right when he advised us not to come here. I really wish we had gone on to Jeypur instead."

"Then we should have missed a real touch of Indian atmosphere," returned Miss Carlton. "It isn't every tourist that can say she has slept in a Hindu palace."

Mrs. Banks looked as if she would much rather forego the privilege.

Presently the khansamah re-entered with the inevitable goat chops, by a fiction termed mutton, and insipid vegetables supposed to be specially tasteful to the Anglo-Saxon palate. The two women watched curiously for the appearance of the White Lord, but if visible to the khansamah he was not so to the other guests. At any rate he did not seem to appreciate the goat chops, which remained untouched on his plate.

"I suppose he must be a ghost," said Miss Carlton, when the two women had retired to their sleeping apartment. "Don't you remember some one on the steamer told us every dak bungalow had its particular ghost."

"My dear girl," protested Mrs. Banks. "How can you suggest such a thing?"

"Well, if we must associate with a ghost," responded Miss Carlton, "I'm glad he is one of our own race, and seems to be a gentleman from the respect paid to him. But I'm really curious about the White Lord. What did he do, or what happened during his life, to send him to meet travelers at the railway station, and to dine with them afterwards in silent and invisible state?"

Mrs. Banks was clearly adverse to discussing the subject. From an intelligent point of view she did not believe in ghosts, but if she could have done so there would certainly have been no more likely spot for a manifestation than the chill and gloomy halls of a Hindu palace given over to the entirely too spacious requirements of a traveler's rest.

But the two women soon discovered that rest was not to be won easily in spite of their fatigue. As it was a case of camping on the cane settees which served the purpose of beds, and the damp air from without grew hourly colder, they decided to maintain their traveling costumes. When the shuffling of the old khansamah's feet died away, an appalling stillness succeeded. The slightest sound was magnified a hundred fold. It seemed possible to hear the very air drifting in through the fretwork tracery of the windows. Imagination began to play upon the scene, and to picture what might have been, what might still be in the adjacent halls and galleries bathed in impenetrable blackness. Was that the patter of rain drops? No, it was a clear night. Did not that sound like the echo of a door slammed to by a gust of wind? There was no current of air of such violence stirring. To divert their minds from such restless thoughts, the two women made an effort to discuss their main object in Krishnabad, but their voices returned upon their ears with a disturbing effect. A jackal that came and howled in the courtyard touched a note of reality that was almost reassuring. The cry of the beast was in a sense a human contrast to those silent whispering walls, and possibly had some influence upon their finally dropping into sleep. Then it was oblivion, until both women started up suddenly to stare in mutual wonder upon the form of Spencer, the young vice-consul.

"Why! — Good Heavens! — How?" — began Miss Carlton with newly awakened vagueness.

The figure made a gesture of silence, and moving a few steps, turned and beckoned the two women to follow.

As they rose they glanced into the audience hall which had served the purpose of their dining-room, and beheld a scene which boded ill for their safety. Three dark figures, nude to the waist, with shaven heads, topknots looped over their ears, and caste marks on their foreheads which gave to their features a demoniacal expression, had seized and apparently gagged the old khansamah. While one of the men stood aside with a strip of cloth in his hand, the other two were engaged in binding the old khansamah to the table with his turban. No words were spoken, but the silence and swiftness of their actions were eloquent.

The two women were hesitating over what course to adopt, when the impatient gestures, and earhest almost pleading expression on the young vice-consul's face formed their decision. The peril was evidently of a nature to hasten from. So they stole noiselessly but quickly after him into the unknown recesses of the palace. But at any rate it seemed familiar to Spencer. After twisting in and out through halls and passages, he led them through a tangled weed-grown garden to a ruined gate. Then they found themselves on the high road leading to the railway station. Spencer kept on ahead with a pale yellow moon lighting their path. They seemed to pass over the level stretch of sand at a faster pace than they had traversed it some hours before in the cart, and reached the railway station feeling they had escaped from a danger made twice awesome by being unknown to all former experience. Their eyes fell upon the glint of the steel rails as a security binding them to their own civilization. Then they sank down on a bench to wonder vaguely what had become of the young vice-consul, who, after reaching the station, had disappeared.

An hour later when the Native station master came to open his office for an early morning train, he seemed to regard it as nothing strange that two mem sahibs should be seated close together on the platform bench. Their usual ways were so far beyond his comprehension, that where their customary habits began or ended was hardly worth consideration.

At last in the gray blue tint of early dawn the headlights of a train gleamed in the distance, gleamed too in the mem sahibs' spirits. It wasn't likely to prove much of a train, but any string of cars jerked along by a locomotive was better than a Hindu palace masquerading as a traveler's rest. Presently it rumbled into the station, Miss Carlton and her companion luckily found a vacant compartment, and before the crawling pace of full speed was attained, had cast themselves on to the leather bunks in a state of exhaustion. When they awoke, the train had left Krishnabad many hours behind, and they were again approaching Rampur Junction. By the time they had made the best toilette at command, the train had pulled into the station. On stepping to the platform almost the first person on whom their eyes fell was Spencer. At first glance his features seemed to wear an anxious expression, but on recognizing them it changed spontaneously to relief.

"Well," he exclaimed, "I'm mighty glad to see you've got away all right from Krishnabad."

Miss Carlton returned his look with one of feeling.

"You cannot imagine how grateful we are to you for our escape," she said. "But for you we cannot think what might have happened, though it's a puzzle to know what became of you after reaching the Krishnabad railway station. We did not see you board the train."

"Grateful to me for your escape!" exclaimed Spencer. "Krishnabad station! Why, I have never been at Krishnabad station in my life."

Miss Carlton stared from Spencer's face to that of her companion in wonder.

"Not at the Krishnabad station?" she repeated. "Then do you mean to say you did not help us to escape from that horrible dak bungalow?"

Spencer looked as much surprised as his two fellow countrywomen.

"I can only say," he went on, "that I have never set foot in Krishnabad, though I'll admit I was headed there now as fast as I could travel, on your account."

"Well," gasped Miss Carlton. "I simply don't know what to make of it."

"The fact is," explained Spencer, "after you left Bombay, that old Brahmin I spoke of, Govind Mitra, turned up. He seemed to know I had given you the little image of Ganesha, and of your trip to Krishnabad. Whether he got all that from one of my clerks, I can't say, but anyway he warned me you would encounter great danger from a band of Thugs recently formed in Krishnabad. They make it part of a religious code to prey upon travelers. Naturally I was frightfully anxious. As the chance of reaching you with a telegram in a Native state was doubtful, I did the best thing I could think of by coming on myself."

"And do you mean to say," persisted Miss Carlton, "that you did not show us the way out of that half-ruined palace, when — when the Thugs — I suppose that is what they were — had attacked the old keeper?"

Spencer shook his head as he led them toward the refreshment room.

"No, though I might wish to have done so, I can certainly prove an alibi. At the time, I was coming up from Bombay in the train, and there were a couple of men I know well in my compartment. But as I said before I was frightfully anxious on your account. Now I think of it, though, old Govind Mitra insisted on giving me another of those weird little images and said he would do something in the way of a warning that was better than our wire messages. I didn't of course set any faith in him, but Govind Mitra does seem to know things, and he may have had something to do with your fortunate illusion. But there's the tiffin bell, which is now the thing of importance."

Over tiffin Miss Carlton related their adventure in detail, being still unable to satisfy herself regarding Spencer's part.

"Well," he asked. "Have you still got that little image?"

"Oh, yes," she replied, producing and setting it on the table. "I must have snatched up my hand bag when we ran from the dak bungalow. Fortunately, too, we had left most of our baggage at the station."

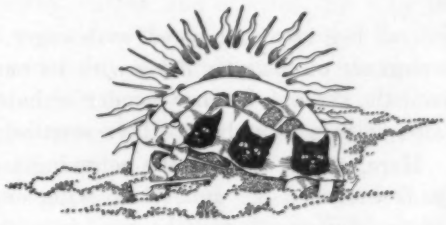
"And here is mine," he said, placing his beside hers. "Now, it seems to me," he added, regarding her with an earnest look, "that we ought to go back to Bombay and ask Govind Mitra what the pair signify. He's a wonderfully wise old chap, is Govind

Mitra. Besides, I've found out there are rock sculptures down there away ahead of those at Krishnabad. What do you say?"

He seemed to hang on her answer with quite intense interest. Miss Carlton glanced toward her companion and apparently gathered encouragement.

"Yes," she nodded. "I — I think it would be a good plan to follow your suggestion. Besides, I am curious to meet Govind Mitra."

"Good!" ejaculated Spencer. "There's the down mail coming in now. Let's go and hunt up Govind Mitra."



A Varied Relationship.*

BY MINNIE BARBOUR ADAMS

THE warning clang of the bell and the conductor's "all abo-ard" had sounded somewhere in the distance, and the train was already in motion when two people stepped aboard. Their entrance was necessarily hurried, but the woman in advance was as calm and unruffled as though stepping aboard an already moving car was an occurrence of no particular moment. Not so her advent, however; the occupants of the crowded coach, without exception, interrupting their settling to gaze at her.

She made a picture well worth their attention as, pausing for an instant, she listened smilingly to a remark of the man behind her; nodded comprehendingly; and, still smiling, came down the aisle, her tall figure swaying gracefully with the movement of the train.

The members of her own sex noted with eager, appreciative eyes the quiet elegance of the gray dress with its narrow band of pink velvet about the throat; but her wonderful hair claimed the attention of all; it was abundant, silky, startling, for it was snowy white. Here, again, showed the relieving touch of color, for pink rosebuds wreathed her small hat, lying on, some times half hidden by, the silvery waves of hair.

The face beneath was of a clear, healthy pallor, its fairness warmed and accentuated by the crimson of her rather full lips; while the same color, softened and mellowed, came and went in fleeting shadows over her expressive features. Her eyes were large and blue, deepening to violet at every passing emotion.

In her hands she carried a single, long-stemmed pink rose, probably the parting gift of some friend; and her manner of doing it would have seemed an affectation had she not been entirely

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unconscious of the scrutiny, the very existence, in fact, of those in the coach.

Her eyes, deepest violet now, reflected the smile on her lips ; but they were abstracted, unseeing even, as though in some strange manner their gaze was projected backward on the man to whom she was listening. In age she might have been thirty-five, and she might have been fifty.

As she passed into a vacant seat, her companion was revealed ; and a start of surprise passed over the spectators, for instead of the mature, courtly gentleman they had expected to see — little Miss Webb had decided he was at least a Governor or a General — they beheld a young man who, with his features radiant with boyish enthusiasm over some story he was telling, seemed no more than twenty ; though, a few minutes later, when deep in the intricacies of some weighty subject they were discussing, the thin, high-bred, intellectual face seemed inscrutable and old.

It was he who carried the little gray wrap, sunshade and bag, while to the porter behind them was entrusted his own light coat and luggage. They soon were settled comfortably ; and, one by one, the other occupants of the car went back to their own affairs. These were many, varied, and exciting, for were they not for the greater part bound on the same errand — the " Mothers' Congress " that convened in Des Moines on the morrow ? Mostly, they were strangers to each other, but not for long ; every conventionality being overridden by the long-suffering steed on which temporarily, they were mounted.

There was one, however, who still regarded the couple with wistful, abstracted eyes ; little Miss Webb, whose diminutive suit-case contained a paper to be read before the great assembly of cradle rockers ; a paper that embodied much thought, no experience, and many ideals. Once or twice her eyes strayed to the alert, vivacious Mrs. Briscom at her side, whose acquaintance she had made on entering the coach ; and she seemed about to speak, but refrained on finding that lady intent on the Congress program.

The woman across the aisle arose and dropped a magazine in the rack overhead, and the man at her side solicitously brushed a raveling from her skirt and with deft fingers adjusted her belt

more carefully in the back. The woman laughed melodiously at some remark ; and, turning, looked down into his upturned face, her violet eyes luminous and tender. Then little Miss Webb forgot the absorbing program in which her name was writ large ; and asked breathlessly :

" What are they, Mrs. Briscom ? "

" What ? Who ? " At that moment several people entered the car and dropped into a seat by the door. " Dagoes, wouldn't you think ? "

" No, no ! " expostulated Miss Webb. " The couple across the aisle ! "

" Oh ! Just plain United States," returned Mrs. Briscom carelessly.

" Dear me ! I mean what relationship ? " explained the other patiently.

Mrs. Briscom looked intently at the couple for a few minutes.

" Mother and son, I should think," she decided, at length, picking up the program. Miss Webb made no reply, but sighed and looked pained.

" What do you think ? " demanded Mrs. Briscom, noticing the silence. The dreamy eyes of the little spinster came back from the fleeting river in time to see the young man's hand close quickly over one of the woman's that had been laid on his arm to better emphasize some remark.

" Lovers," she replied unhesitatingly, her face brooding and wistful.

" But, my dear gir — woman ! " expostulated Mrs. Briscom ; " She's old enough to be — "

" They're lovers ! " repeated Miss Webb decidedly.

Mrs. Briscom surveyed the pair with a new interest. The man was telling something of great importance, evidently ; the graceful gestures and occasional nods and shrugs making it all very graphic, it would seem, for the woman's eyes were wide and her sensitive lips parted.

" Oh, I know ! " Mrs. Briscom explained with easy assurance. " He's been away to school and she's fetching him home. Of course he'd be very polite and attentive — for awhile." And she sighed.

"Maybe," Miss Webb demurred; "still, I feel sure —"

"Seems to me they look alike," interrupted Mrs. Briscom. "The same carriage of the head, and the same long, white hands."

"That's my cousin, Mrs. Springer from Joliet, in that end seat facing us, Mrs. Briscom!" cried Miss Webb with sudden decision; "and that woman with her is Cordelia Yates, teacher of psychology at the University. They've been watching them ever since they came on, and I'm going to ask them what they think."

"All right! Do!" agreed Mrs. Briscom, beginning to share the other's curiosity.

Miss Webb rose and carefully shook out the folds of her skirt, looking with nervous dread at the long, eye-bordered aisle.

"I — I don't mind going," she confessed; "but I do dread the coming back as much — oh! as much as I do reading my paper to-morrow."

"Nonsense!" said the other sharply. "The women look at your clothes, and the men stare at you because they have nothing better at hand!"

This was rather doubtful comfort, but she started on it.

"Why, we've been wondering about them, too," admitted Mrs. Springer. "Miss Yates thinks they are married, probably on their wedding tour."

"Oh! do you?" cried Miss Webb disappointedly, turning to the Great Authority. "I thought they were lovers."

"Does marriage preclude the possibility of their being lovers?" Miss Yates asked sonorously, looking sternly at the shrinking little spinster.

"But he is so very polite — I never saw —" she began falteringly.

"The politeness of the true gentleman will be augmented by the marriage vow," interposed Miss Yates rebukingly. "Psychology teaches us that the subconscious self —"

"Oh, fudge!" exclaimed Mrs. Springer irreverently. "Experience has taught us married ones a lot more than all your ologies. Now, I think they are nothing more than brother and sister; the congenial, chummy kind, you know."

"Maybe," again admitted Miss Webb, and started on the dreaded return trip. She fixed her eyes on a marvel of the milliner's art and tried to fathom its intricacies; she pretended to be much interested in the fleeting bits of landscape she saw from the windows; but it was useless, and her color rose as her courage fell, and she felt an almost ungovernable desire to run and escape all those inquisitive eyes.

She was nearly opposite the disturbing couple when the train came to a standstill, giving a vicious jerk to be sure of it; and, for an instant, she clung wildly to the back of the seat directly in front of them. The young man's hand grasped her arm and steadied her; and, as she nodded her thanks and hurried on, she heard him say, as though resuming an interrupted conversation; "But, my dear sister; do you not see —"

She heard no more; but, crowding past Mrs. Briscom, she sank into her seat and wearily leaned her head against the window.

"Well?" interrogated the other, laying down the program.

"They're brother and sister!" she returned shortly.

"I thought I saw a resemblance," Mrs. Briscom declared triumphantly. "What did your friends think?"

"Mrs. Springer was right," Miss Webb responded dejectedly; then, as she saw that lady regarding her intently, she nodded violently a number of times with a little sidewise one at the end to indicate the couple across the aisle. Mrs. Springer communicated her interpretation of the nods to Miss Yates, and that lady sent a long distance inquiry with her eyes. More nods and much expressive pantomime; but, still they did not seem satisfied.

"Go up and tell them!" urged Mrs. Briscom.

"I? I go back to be stared into a fever again?" asked Miss Webb witheringly. "She can be his grandmother for all of me; yes, his great-great-grandmother at that!" and she cast a disdainful glance across the aisle.

"Well, I'll go then," volunteered Mrs. Briscom, "They're right by the water cooler, and I've been thirsty for an hour."

"Won't you please bring back a glass of water for me?" Miss Webb implored weakly.

"Certainly. Don't you feel well?" asked the elder woman solicitously.

"Oh, yes!" returned the sufferer wearily; and the other departed.

The conversation at the other end of the car was rather protracted, and many speculative glances were turned on the unconscious couple. At last, however, Mrs. Briscom started on the return trip, gingerly carrying a brimming cup; and Miss Webb envied her her entire self-possession; but, as she came abreast of the couple, she hesitated, staring at them wonderingly while the cup tilted perilously; then, seeming to remember herself, she hurried across the aisle and dropped into her seat, proffering the half empty cup to her neighbor.

"You were mistaken," she announced crisply.

"How?" asked Miss Webb, the cup half way to her lips.

"As I passed them, she looked at him with that sweet smile of hers and said as plain as could be: 'My dear husband, I'll make you one as soon as we reach home.'"

"But —" began Miss Webb incredulously.

"Oh! I was directly facing her," interposed the other shortly; "and I couldn't have been mistaken; though I must say I was surprised."

"Well; it's beyond me," said Miss Webb, sipping a little of the water; and then, wetting her folded handkerchief with the rest of it, she carefully laid it across her forehead at a safe distance from her waved hair, leaned against the casing, and closed her eyes.

"I've just told Miss Yates that she was right," announced Mrs. Briscom. "Dear me! She doesn't understand. There! Well, for a psychologist, she does seem awful thick headed. Oh! she's coming back."

Miss Webb opened her eyes and saw Miss Yates swaying down the aisle, her gaze directed sternly toward the disquieting couple. Then she, too, hesitated an instant, and a surprised look crossed her face.

"You were mistaken, Miss Webb," she announced with decision, pausing beside them.

"Yes," agreed that lady resignedly.

"You were right, after all, Miss Yates," chirped Mrs. Briscom admiringly.

"I? But I wasn't; they're mother and son."

"Oh, no!" returned Mrs. Briscom easily; "you were right. As I passed just now, she called him husband."

For a moment the three stared at each other in silence; then, sighing resignedly, Miss Webb took a box of tablets from her handbag, swallowed one with a tragic air, and closed her eyes as though dismissing a subject too deep for her.

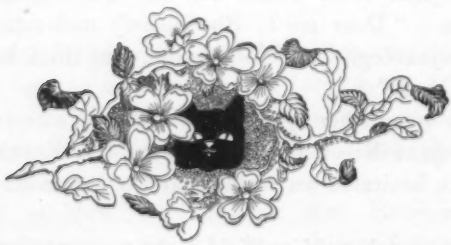
"Evidently two of us are mistaken!" cried Miss Yates accusingly; and imperiously beckoned Mrs. Springer. That lady stared frankly at the couple as she passed them, and the waiting women kept her company.

The train began to slow down. At the approach of the porter, the man rose and, taking the little gray wrap from the rack, stood expectantly. As they came to a standstill, the woman also rose, and thrust her arms into the extended sleeves.

"When we are married, dearest," the man said tenderly, his words coming plainly to the four women across the aisle in the sudden cessation of the roar of the wheels; "when we are married, I think I shall give you a private car for a wedding present."

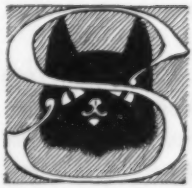
She casually turned her beautiful eyes toward the four women as she raised her hands to her hair.

"Of course I should appreciate it; but I think we would miss a great deal of pleasure, Robert," she returned softly, and followed him from the car.



In the Short Grass Country.*

BY ARTHUR CHAPMAN.



UNDANCE KID led his pony out of the quaking asps, and, from the edge of the ravine, gazed long at the ranch house. A wolf had trotted forth at almost the same point, less than an hour before and had made a similar survey. There was something hinting of kinship between wolf and man in the way both had looked, with inquiring, suspicious eyes. The wolf had turned and trotted back into the quaking asps, but Sundance Kid advanced, still leading his tired pony, and swished through the dew-heavy grass to the ranch house door. The green blinds at the front windows were shut, and so was the front door, so Sundance Kid was not afraid of a shot from that quarter. He had kept the house between himself and the barn as he advanced, and now, dropping his pony's reins, and leaving the animal in a position for a quick getaway, Sundance Kid walked swiftly along the side of the house, stooping as he passed the open window, in order to avoid a shot in the body at close range. Then, stepping to the kitchen door Sundance Kid knocked thereon with the butt of his long, blue-barreled revolver — for it is in such manner that a traveler must ask for subsistence in the short-grass country when there is a price on his head.

There was a shuffling of feet behind the door, and Sundance Kid fell back a step or two and swung his gun easily into position, but a moment later he tucked it hastily into the scabbard at his hip, for a woman was looking at him and inquiring what he wanted.

"I'm Sundance Kid, and they're after me for that Burlington holdup and a few other things. I want somethin' to eat, and a little grub to put in my saddle pockets." The explanation was made without any touch of bravado, for Sundance Kid never "showed

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off." He wanted grub, and in the shortest possible time, and there was no need of putting any frills or didoes when it came to making his wants known.

"Likewise," he added, before the woman had time to answer, "I want another pony. I'll leave my own, and I'll bet you ain't got any bronk on the place that's worth within twenty dollars of him, so I git the worst of the trade."

The woman looked at him in an unemotional way. Sundance Kid saw that she was not like most of the women of the short-grass country. The harsh, dry winds of the plains had not taken the bloom from her cheeks, though she must have been forty. Her hair was not drawn into a tight little knob at the back of her head, but there was plenty of it, and it hung loose about the nape of her neck in brown folds. She was tall — taller than Sundance Kid — and with something masculine in the suggestion of strength in arm and shoulder. Her eyes were red-lidded and heavy, but, when they opened wide, Sundance Kid saw that they were yellow, like a cat's.

"You can come in and git somethin' to eat," she said. "I was just gittin' ready to start breakfast anyway. There's a couple of horses, a gray and a sorrel in the c'ral. The gray's the best."

"I'll rope him after I eat," said Sundance Kid, following her into the kitchen.

"I'll have to give you cold bacon," said the woman. "I can't start the fire, because God knows it's hot enough now, and my boy's in the next room near dead with typhoid fever, so I ain't goin' to raise the temperature fer anybody — not even fer Sundance Kid."

There was no ring of defiance in her voice, but she spoke with quiet finality that silenced Sundance Kid, who was thirsting for coffee.

"All right," he said, sullenly. "Jest dump what coffee you've got into a sack and let me take it. I'll make some myself when I git out in the brush."

The woman set forth a good meal, and Sundance Kid ate gulpingly. Then he watched her preparing the lunch that was to go in his saddle pockets.

"Where's the men folks?" he questioned, abruptly.

"Gone to the hills to see if they can git some ice for my boy," said the woman. "The doctor telephoned f'm the Forks sayin' nothin' but ice packs 'd save him. So Hank and Nils, the hired man, have gone to see if they can't pack enough ice down here to pull him through."

"So you've got a telephone, have you?" said Sundance Kid. "I'll cut the wire when I go to the c'ral."

The woman did not answer. Sundance Kid walked to the doorway and looked toward the distant mountains, which were losing the pink tinge on their snow caps as the sunlight grew stronger.

"It's fifty miles to timber line," he said. "They can't git there and back in time to do any good. How long's your kid been sick?"

"Nigh three weeks," said the woman. "The crisis is just about due. That's what makes it so hard."

"How old's the kid?"

"Thirteen, next October. He's sleepin' now, or I'd let you see him."

"I don't want to see him," said Sundance Kid. "I never want to look at sick folks. Damn it; people ain't got no right to be sick. Why can't they die, when it comes their time, jest like animals? This bein' sick business ain't accordin' to natur'."

The woman made no reply, and Sundance Kid again looked at the distant peaks. Great thoughts were stirring in his bosom. He had grown old in crime, which was the reason the sardonic West had dubbed him "Kid." He had looked unmoved at death in many forms, and had slain, sometimes needlessly, without compunction. But now, with the proceeds of his last train robbery in a belt under his coat, Sundance Kid was turning to Canada to begin another life. He was shrewd enough to know that every gambler's luck changed at some time, and he intended to anticipate the change in his case. He had been mapping out a course of good conduct to be followed in the future, and here was a chance to make a fine beginning. He had never done a good deed in his life, that he could remember, but opportunity was now

within his grasp. As to the danger involved, Sundance Kid was too caloused to the ravings of the county officials and their posses to have any fear. As long as he was not grubless and afoot he did not care for any peace officer in the land — especially this new sheriff of Crook county, with his dude ways and his pathetic enthusiasms for automatic revolvers and bloodhounds, and other innovations that made old-timers sneer.

"Say, I got a proposition to make," said Sundance Kid, turning away from the doorway. "I hate like thinder to think of leavin' your kid to die jest because he needs ice, and them fool men-folks of yourn 'll never be able to bring any f'm the mountains. I know where there's a cave, not fur f'm here, and there's a big supply of ice there. It's a reg'lar natural icehouse, and I guess it's been storin' ice sence the cave men was huntin' them big fossil critters in this part of the country. You give me the gray, and the sorrel fer a pack animal, and I'll have some back here afore noon."

"It's mighty good of you," began the woman, "but ain't you got troubles of your own?"

"I'm used to 'em," said Sundance Kid, simply. "Besides, I've shuck this dood sheriff's posse, so they won't git my trail for two days, and then it'll be so cold that it'll freeze the noses off them cute little bloodhounds they've sicked on to me."

"All right. Here's your grub. You stuff it in your saddle pockets, and I'll go and bring out the gray and the pack animal."

Sundance Kid, after putting his grub in the pockets of his saddle, led his pony to the corral, where he found the woman roping a big, rangy gray and a stocky but somewhat slow-footed sorrel. She cast the rope with precision, and soon had the sorrel tied to the corral bars, and deftly adjusted a pack saddle and panniers while Sundance Kid was roping the gray and transferring his saddle to the back of that animal. Leaving his own tired pony in the corral, Sundance Kid swung into the saddle, and, leading the pack animal, paused for a final word.

"I'll be back at noon or thereabouts," he said, "but I won't come to the house ag'in. There might be some neighbor here, and I don't want to do no more killin'. I'm through with that fer

good. I'll tie the pack animal in the middle of the ravine, right where the sheep trail crosses it, if you ain't there. You come there and git it, and you'll find the panniers full of ice — not snow ice like you git up there in the mountains, but real, hard genu-wine ice, froze in nature's own ice factory."

"I'm sure obliged to you," the woman said. "It's goin' to be a frightful hot day, and I doubt if Tommy could stand it, he's so near gone now."

"Pore little feller!" said Sundance Kid. Then, ashamed of his first display of sentiment, he pricked the sides of the gray with his spurs, and rode out of the ranch yard, and struck off over the high bench land at the rear.

As he rode, the heart of Sundance Kid swelled with varying emotions. Doing his first good deed was proving a trying experience. He had never remembered feeling so "queer-like," but withal it was a pleasurable sensation. He pictured the scene in the ranch house when the men returned and found the sick boy resting comfortably in ice packs, with all danger past, and the picture was so pleasing that he even essayed a whistled tune. Then the sense of danger came back with a rush, and he cursed himself heartily when he found that he had been riding unconcernedly along a high ridge, in full view of anybody who might be in the vicinity.

"Samaritans ain't no business to be hunted with bloodhounds," he said, as he struck down into the draw and followed it to its head, where it merged with another. Then, at the thought of the bloodhounds, he laughed a short, mirthless laugh, his sole expression of a long-somnolent sense of humor. Once he caught a glimpse of the white top of a sheep wagon far off on the plains, and the barking of a sheep dog came to him faintly. A slight detour enabled him to avoid the camp without being seen, and then he headed across the plain, toward a strange, wind-eroded rock called the Devil's Tower, which rose hundreds of feet above the plain, serving as a landmark and guide for the hunter and the hunted.

. . . . . .

It was noon when Sundance Kid reached the old sheep trail

that dipped into the quaking asp draw below the ranch house. The silvery-topped sagebrush was fairly dancing in the glare, and Sundance Kid shaded his eyes with his hand as he gazed into the cool depths below. The panniers on the sorrel pack-horse were dripping. Sundance Kid put his hand on one of them, and nodded with satisfaction.

"That's nice and cool," he said. "I reckon I'm the only man in the hull country that ever knowed about that ice cave. There's ice enough there to keep that kid cool till the men folks git back with more f'm the hills. I sure hope it does all the woman thinks it's going to do fer him."

Sundance Kid's eyes narrowed as he looked again into the depths of the draw.

"What if that woman was lyin', and there wasn't no kid?" he muttered. "Seems as if I orter seed for myself. This Samaritan business makes a man take too much fer granted. But shucks! it's got to be all right."

Touching the gray lightly with the spur, and with the pack-horse scrambling after, Sundance Kid rode down the sheep trail, so plainly defined by thousands of sharp little hoofs. At the first bend in the quaking asps, he saw the woman. She was smiling, but her eyes were wide open, and by their yellow gleam in her pale face, Sundance Kid knew he was betrayed. He reined up the gray and his hand shot forward like a rattlesnake's head. He fired once at the woman and once at the dark faces in the covert at her side, but the sorrel pack-horse lunged into the gray as Sundance Kid drew the saddle animal to its haunches, and spoiled the first shot. The second went wide because Sundance Kid had received his death wound before the bullet was sped. As he plunged from the gray horse, and sprawled grotesquely, with one foot in his stirrup, the trail seemed alive with armed men. The woman was first to catch the snorting gray, and her yellow eyes were the first to blaze triumphantly into the contorted face of Sundance Kid.

"It wasn't fair sport, but he's our game all right," said the young sheriff, whose face was pale, and whose twitching hands showed that his first essay in shooting at a human target had been futile. "There's a leather belt on him, and I'll bet it's

full of the express company's money. Let's see what's in the pack."

Striding to the sorrel he looked into one of the panniers.

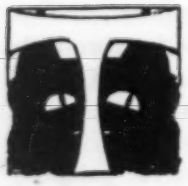
"It's nothing but ice," he said. "What was Sundance Kid doing with ice?"

"That's what got me the reward," said the woman. "That and the telephone wire he forgot to cut. It's ice for pore little Willie — or was it Tommy? — who's sick with typhoid fever. To think of him takin' in a yarn like that when there ain't a child within ten miles of here!"

With Amazon-like strength the woman emptied the panniers, and, when the quaking asp draw had ceased to resound to the echoes of excited speech, and only a dark spot on the ground told where the outlaw had fallen, a little mound of ice melted rapidly in the hoof-scarred sheep trail, and the clear, cool water mingled with the blood of Sundance Kid, Samaritan.

The Iceberg Syndicate.*

BY JAMES FRANCIS DWYER.



THE little bald-headed man in the corner looked around when Fraser finished his story.

"Pursuits of that kind are a trifle dangerous," he said, quietly, "but a man will walk on a very thin plank if there is gold at the other end."

Fraser nodded. He had been recounting some of his adventures in connection with a python-hunting expedition, and the little man was the first to make a comment.

"I never caught pythons," he continued, "but when I went out snaring icebergs for the Manhattan Iceberg Syndicate I struck an experience or two. Icebergs are just as slippery as pythons—"

"Say!" interrupted Fraser, his face coloring slightly as he leaned forward; "you don't think I spun that yarn out of gossamer, do you?"

"No, no," cried the little man, hurriedly, "your story is more convincing than a Gatling gun. I was just drawing a comparison. The python seems to be a particularly awkward animal to subjugate, but an iceberg possesses a degree of cussedness that makes its pursuit and capture carry the same sensation as your business.

"I was introduced to the game way back in the early eighties when the big ice famine struck New York. Something upset the calendar that year, and summer rushed down upon the country before they had harvested enough ice to cool champagne for the 'Four Hundred.' Prices hopped like a hungry grasshopper when he sights a green patch in a sand desert, and the man who could afford to buy three ounces of ice a day was in the class that habitate on the top rungs of the poverty escapes.

"I owned three steam tugs in those days, and as I was sitting on the deck one morning when the mercury was hitting the high

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grades without an effort, a long pale-faced fellow climbed over the side and came towards me. He carried a newspaper cutting and a roll of bills, and he handed them to me in that order. The bit of paper said that a Nova Scotian skipper had sighted an iceberg two hundred miles east of Nantucket, but that didn't interest me as much as the wad.

"'What's the currency for'? I questioned.

"'I represent the Manhattan Iceberg Syndicate,' replied the stranger, 'and I want you to tow that block of frozen ocean in as quick as you can get your hawsers on it.'

"You bet I stared at him. Drinking lukewarm stuff with the temperature at ninety-five was inculcating a lot of people with the loco bug in those days, and I thought I had butted into a case in the last stages. I tried to shoo him off the boat, but he wouldn't go. I pointed out to him that an iceberg was as dangerous to meddle with as a crooked politician besides being made of much more perishable material, but he wouldn't be put off. Finally I agreed to go out in search of the berg in consideration of a cash payment of one thousand dollars, which payment was to be increased to two thousand if the job of pulling the ice lump to the harbor appeared practicable. As this was left to my discretion I felt pretty secure as we butted out into the Atlantic.

"We found the berg all right. It was melting away quicker than the wad of a fool guy playing the ponies, and I kept praying hard for it to disappear altogether while that fellow was urging me to go in and clinch with it. He got excited when I contented myself with viewing the affair at a safe distance, and the fool wanted to take a boat and tie a hawser to a pole that stuck up out of it at one end.

"That pole puzzled me. It kept growing taller as the pieces fell away from the main section, and on the second day it stood up like the mainmast of a windjammer. The berg performed a few acrobatic feats that would have been rather unhealthy for any boat that had it in tow, and the last one of these that she did gave us a bit of a shock. She split right down the centre and there right before our eyes was a Spanish galleon that had been boxed up in that lump of ice like the kernel of a horse chestnut!

"You should have seen that long fellow when that old Noah's

ark came into view! He tore round the tug like a madman offering the crew fifty dollars a day if they were game to pull up alongside the berg in the small boats, and as it was as calm as a mill pond three of them consented.

"'What are you going to do?' I asked as he clambered over the side. 'Do you think you can launch the old poppyshow?'

"He lowered two axes into the boat, and then he turned round to me. 'You just remember the terms of our contract,' he said, quietly. 'I have put it down in writing that all icebergs we find are my property. If I'm not much mistaken this boat is one that comprised the Spanish Armada that invaded England in the fifteenth century. The defeated fleet tried to get away round the north of Scotland, but they were all wrecked, and as this one is now my property I think you'll have a load of gold to tug to New York instead of frozen water.'"

The little bald-headed man remained quiet for a few minutes, and Fraser grew impatient. "How did it end?" he asked.

"How?" repeated the little man irritably. "Don't you know that Providence builds the nest of the blind bird? That lunatic that paid me a thousand dollars thinking he could drag icebergs in out of the Atlantic and sell them at ten cents a pound in New York City salvaged three hundred thousand dollars out of that frozen-up treasure chest, and the only piece that I got out of the haul is this little chunk of gold I wear on my fob!"

He lifted the end of his chain and showed a Spanish doubloon that bore the head of King Philip who had fitted out his stately Armada when Queen Elizabeth ruled over England.

Fraser was the first to break the silence. "Say," he murmured, "do you think there are any more of those gondolas up there in cold storage?"

But the little man didn't answer. A stout lady had signaled to him from the hotel lobby, and he was hurrying towards her as fast as his short legs would take him.

His Most Important Case.*

BY ANTOINETTE DE COURSEY PATTERSON.

EORGE WORTHINGTON'S cleverness was first made manifest, though the real depth of it was not known until afterwards by confession, in a society where he had been urged by friends to speak against an innovation these same friends were anxious to have voted down.

Through some stupid blunder in the presentation of the case, Mr. Worthington thought he was to stand for exactly the opposite of what was really desired. One of the men most interested, realizing this just before the speech reached its climax, interrupted the speaker with:

"But, Mr. Worthington, I think you must have misunderstood the wishes of those who asked you to speak on this subject, we meant exactly the — "

The speaker got no farther.

Raising a graceful hand to command silence, Mr. Worthington continued:

"I have now given you all the reasons why this plan should be carried out. I shall now explain the far more vital reasons why it should not."

Then, with consummate skill, he tore down and demolished each separate structure he had apparently been at such pains to rear. His final argument was almost unanimously accepted.

But this had happened fifteen years ago, when George Worthington was not more than twenty-five or six. Two of the friends who know of the incident had died, and for some months he had lost sight of the third, Robert Sharwood, who was forever traveling.

As for Worthington, his career at the bar was indeed a brilliant one; but society wondered why he remained unmarried. The truth might have been found in the fact that his very existence

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seemed based on reason which, though an excellent thing for the practice of law, had proved quite fatal to sentiment. And this in spite of well-meaning friends — for George was a nice fellow — who would have provided him with enough wives to fill a harem.

When, as occasionally happened, he seemed about to be carried away, reason was sure to assert herself and set him on his feet again, often with something of a thud. To the questions he must perforce ask himself concerning this or that girl, he somehow could not find satisfactory answers; would he love this one if her beauty faded? He feared he would not. Would the sweetness and gentleness of that one tire him after a time? He feared it would.

The one person who was the exception to this questioning habit was his mother, for whom he had an affection that certainly had no rational basis save that of close relationship. Mrs. Worthington was short and fat and pink, her personal appearance affording a perfect expression of her type of mind. She could not reach to any height, nor could she by any possibility move quickly, and she generally saw things in a rosy light. Her son's real devotion, however, did not interfere with an unholy pleasure he took in teasing her. If the dear old lady was bemoaning the weather as too stormy to permit of her attending a funeral, he would say sympathetically:

"Never mind, Mother, I shall take you to a matinee instead the first clear day!"

Or else, when she would begin some gentle reminiscences of the mild little love-affairs of her early days, he would exclaim, with a twinkle of his eye which he was very careful she should not see:

"Ah, now we are going to hear something!"

But if George Worthington loved his mother, she, for her part, almost worshipped him. His strong intellect she admired, without in the least comprehending, thinking of him indeed only as the little child on whom she could still lavish a mother's care.

His birthday was observed with the same conscientiousness as Christmas, but she sometimes sighed at the increasing number of candles on the cake. This fête came in January, and, as George

was very fond of strawberries, they always figured largely in the form of tarts, shortcake, and ice cream.

It was just after this last birthday, with its forty red candles, that Worthington first met, in a most conventional way, at a dinner given by his friend Mrs. Platt, a most unconventional girl, Mary Levering by name. She was not pretty, though she might appear so on occasions, but there was something about her that would always attract, or stimulate an interest, however jaded. This interest she aroused was possibly due to the keenness with which she always seemed to be enjoying life, and the infinite variety of the things which appealed to her quick intellect and a certain way she had of again presenting them. She was only five when her mother died and left her in the care of a nomad of a father. They had traveled about everywhere, and Mary's appetite had grown by what it had fed on. This father, deeply loved and much regretted, had also died, two years before, leaving her a very large fortune, which perhaps was not the best thing for a girl of twenty-three with such independent ways.

It was impossible with Mary's roving disposition for her to accept the kind offer of a home from her father's two prim maiden sisters who never did anything or went anywhere. So Miss Anna and Miss Jane wept over her, lamented the strain of gypsy blood they felt must have run somewhere in her mother's family, and which had so influenced their poor brother, — every one knows the strength of environment — and urged upon her a last request: that for the sake of the name of Levering she would always have with her some elderly person for a chaperon. Mary, who was an amiable girl and really desired to do the right thing, kissed the flustered old ladies and promised. Soon afterwards she considered herself most fortunate in her choice of Miss Mira Sprague to fill the position. Miss Sprague, who had started out with somewhat of a suspicion regarding her youthful employer, ended by loving her dearly and yielding abjectly to her every whim. And now they were in New York for a short stay, and Mary at the dinner to which we have already alluded.

Mary had that morning received a letter from Robert Sharwood, forwarded to her from Paris. In it he said:

"I hear you expect to see something of Mrs. Henry Platt when

in New York. In this event you may run across my old friend George Worthington, the man I told you about, who saved the day for us at that society meeting. If you should see him, tell him he might drop a fellow a line once in a while."

When Sharwood had first told Mary Levering the story, her mental comment had been, "How very clever, but how could any one ever really believe such a man?" The story had impressed her, and she had now met Mr. Worthington; but she decided for the present to say nothing about having heard of him before.

By the time dinner was over, George Worthington, who sat next to Miss Levering, was distinctly charmed. When he finally asked her how long she would be in New York, and she had answered only two days, as she was sailing for Italy, intending to make quite a stay in Rome, he exclaimed:

"What a delightful coincidence for me! That is just where my mother and I are going within a few weeks."

Mrs. Worthington was at that moment sitting placidly by the fire knitting an afghan for George, and without the slightest idea of a prospective trip.

After dinner Miss Levering entertained her friend's guests most charmingly with some of the folk-songs of the various countries in which she had lived. She had no great musical ability, but she had the knack of knowing just what would please. Indeed, the girl had caught something interesting from everywhere she had been; she could speak several languages fairly well, and during a stay in the Western States had learned both how to ride and shoot. Of all her accomplishments it was perhaps in the last she was the most proficient.

And so the evening passed, every one seeming to have had a better time than usual, perhaps from having unconsciously caught some of the girl's bright enthusiasm.

Worthington, instead of calling a cab, decided to walk home. He wanted to think quietly about this new acquaintance whom he had fully made up his mind to see again in Rome. Here was a girl he said to himself, who, if he should fall in love with her, would never provoke his mind with embarrassing questions. He would never have to ask himself if he would still love her when her beauty faded, for the simple reason she had no beauty to fade.

He could not possibly tire of her, there was too much variety about her for that. He would not run any risk of being bored with too much of her society for, owing to her various interests, he would in all probability get very little of it. Worthington was certainly in the way of thinking he had at last met a girl with whom, if things went far enough, he could count on remaining in love for a lifetime. Of course he knew perfectly well he had not reached this state yet, and not for a moment did he flatter himself that any impression had been made on the girl, but somehow that night there was a brighter glow over everything, from the commonplace sky-scrapers to the beautiful frosty stars.

The next morning, when Worthington told his mother of the proposed trip, she demurred so at going, that, pressing the question, he found she had made wonderful plans for having the entire house repainted, and had only been worrying over the inconvenience it might cause him. Here was an opportunity, so he said that, after he had finished work on an important case, he would need a little trip and would go over to Italy by himself for a few weeks. He refrained from teasing her when he saw how his absence would be compensated for by the complete sway she would thus be enabled to hold over painters and decorators. Her taste was really excellent, and she was so happy in this especial form of commotion, that a few weeks later, having temporarily wound up his business affairs, he found himself on a steamer bound for Naples with no compunctions whatever for not having insisted on her going with him.

Reaching Rome, and registering at ——— Hotel, almost the first person Worthington fell in with was his old friend Robert Sharwood.

"Why, old man, how are you?" was the simultaneous greeting of the two, followed on the part of Sharwood with:

"Well, if there was ever any one on earth I'm glad to see it is you. In fact, George, it is nothing short of providential that you have just turned up. You were always a chivalrous soul, you know, and here is a lady in distress, an acquaintance, too, whom no one is so well fitted to help as yourself."

"Explain things a little," said Worthington.

"Miss Levering," the lawyer was at once all attention, "has

gotten into a serious scrape with the authorities in Catrona, a little town near here. She was with friends yesterday who had made an excursion to the place for the sake of a view. After dinner, while they were all sitting on the piazza of the inn, some one told a tale of wonderful marksmanship, at which some one else laughed — I think I am stating the case correctly — Miss Levering's message was a bit involved and panicky — and said such a thing was as impossible as it would be to hit the weather-cock on a church steeple that could be seen in the distance.

"Miss Levering espoused the cause of the first speaker, and said it most certainly could have happened if it was no more difficult than hitting that weather vane. In a word, so warm grew the discussion that she finally got a gun she had seen somewhere in the house and before anybody was fully aware of what she was up to — flash! — bang — and the church steeple was without a vane!

"It was, of course, all the work of a moment, and the result of one of those crazy impulses which are apt to strike any of us at times, but the authorities do not see it at all in that way. Miss Levering at once confessed to the act, but in spite of all her friends could do, and all the money she offered, these same authorities are so indignant at the insult to their steeple that they won't let Miss Levering leave Catrona until a trial of some sort can take place.

"Her companion and a Mr. and Mrs. Allen, two loyal friends, but complete strangers in Italy, have remained with her in Catrona. She 'phoned me a statement of the case and begged me to look up some competent person in Rome to come to her rescue and if possible avoid appealing to the Consul. I have found the competent person, so I put the whole thing in his hands." And Sharwood bowed.

George Worthington had listened most attentively to this recital. It was not exactly the sort of meeting he had planned with Miss Levering; but it would afford him the opportunity of doing her a decided favor, which after all might count for a good deal. It was surely a most reprehensible thing, this shooting at church steeples, and as a rule there could be but one opinion of a girl so disposed; but in this case exceptional circumstances were

to be considered. Like himself on many occasions, she had only been trying her best to prove a point. And when it is found that an action, even one open to criticism, closely resembles one of our own, its hard outlines are apt to soften quite a little. Yes, he would most certainly lend a hand to Miss Levering in this predicament.

After attending to a few things he took the train for Catrona. A short hour found him in the presence of Miss Levering. A very pale and embarrassed Miss Levering this time, and in no way suggestive of the sparkling creature he had so recently seen in New York. Nevertheless, she seemed to him even more attractive. Also he liked the present situation, as it meant her entire dependence on him, and this would provide her with a new emotion which she would have to trace directly back to him. It must of necessity bring them nearer together.

After the first greetings, and further explanations on the part of the law-breaker, Worthington shook his head solemnly.

"Too bad! too bad!" he said. "But I should not take this too seriously, though, Miss Levering. The maximum punishment for such an offence could not possibly exceed more than five years' imprisonment at hard labor, perhaps reduced to three if the prisoner proves docile!"

Then, seeing the girl was really frightened, Worthington refrained from further teasing and said he would go at once to the local authorities to see what could be done.

Worthington's fine presence and persuasive manner favorably impressed the Italian officials in the very beginning, as did also his proficiency in their language. He expressed in most florid terms his own great regret at what had happened to their beautiful weather-vane, but urged them to remember that Miss Levering was an American, who had spent much of her time in the Western part of that country, where such things were unfortunately of frequent occurrence. And then he entertained them for a full hour with tales he had heard of the doings in the wild west.

By this time his listeners were so charmed that he had little difficulty in arranging about the price for a fine new weather-vane and obtaining full permission for his country-woman to depart at her convenience. The authorities of Catrona expressed

themselves now as quite satisfied that no insult had in any way been intended; indeed the lawyer left them almost with the feeling that their steeple had in some vague way been complimented.

So that afternoon Mr. Worthington escorted Mr. and Mrs. Allen, Miss Sprague and Miss Levering safely back to Rome; and as he fell asleep that night after so strenuous a day, the last memory of which he was conscious was of a face both abashed and relieved and, now that its owner was quite safe again, a bit defiant.

The last words Miss Levering had said to him before they said goodnight, and after she had again expressed her thanks, were:

"I have just one request to make, Mr. Worthington — "

"And that?" he had asked.

"Please promise me that never, never, *never* will you allude in any way to this wretched piece of business again.

"I promise," he had assured her, "but only provided a vital reason for doing so never comes up." This had satisfied her, for she felt that the very world itself must be as heartily sick of the whole stupid thing as she was.

After this experience it was of course the most natural thing in the world that Mr. Worthington should be much with the Allens, Miss Sprague, Robert Sharwood and Miss Levering, and many were the pleasant excursions taken by them through Rome and its fascinating environs.

Soon the month Worthington had allowed himself slipped away, but not before he knew he was deeply, everlastingly in love with Mary Levering. The only doubtful element in the case was Mary herself. He interested her, of that he was sure, but whenever he turned aside from the frivolous or simply agreeable and voiced some of his deeper sentiments, she would look at him with a curious expression suggestive of suspicion. Once, indeed, when he had given utterance to one of his most serious thoughts, she had actually said, "Do you really mean that?"

And so he had by no means made all the headway he could wish; and his mother and affairs in New York were calling him home. He felt he must tell Mary Levering all she meant to him before he went, but for the last few days the fates had not been propitious in affording opportunities. On this especial evening, though, they had relented. Worthington had called at

Miss Levering's apartment in obedience to an engagement to take her and Miss Sprague to join the Allens at the theatre. But when he reached her pretty little drawing-room it was to find only Miss Levering. Miss Sprague had retired with a headache, and the Allens had just sent word postponing the party because the piece they wished especially to see had been put off until the next evening.

"I will spend part of this evening with you instead, if I may," Worthington said, taking a chair. "Believe me, I should rather do this than anything else in the world just now."

The great earnestness in his tone could not fail to catch her attention, and again that puzzling look came into her eyes. Worthington saw there was nothing to gain by any further delay; so he went straight ahead.

"Miss Levering, I must leave for New York in only a few days now, and I simply cannot go without telling you how I love you and asking you to be my wife."

He had risen and stood leaning over her chair. The man who seemed all coolness and self-possession, Mary could feel was for the moment trembling.

The girl clasped and unclasped her hands nervously, then she answered:

"Indeed, indeed I appreciate what you have said, but I don't see how I can possibly answer as you would wish."

Worthington pulled himself together and regarded her calmly. "Why not?" he asked.

"Because," came the reply, so low he could scarcely hear it, "I'm afraid of you, — I was afraid of you before I knew you!"

Worthington looked his astonishment. "I am very stupid," he said, "but I confess I don't quite understand." Then, walking up to a mirror and regarding himself critically, he added, "I really think I am on the whole rather a mild-looking chap *now*, though what you could have fancied I looked like before you knew me I of course can't imagine!"

"It isn't that," the girl said.

"Well, then, what is it?" — Worthington spoke with determination.

"It's your type of mind," Mary Levering admitted with evi-

dent reluctance. "Your ability to twist things any way you want." Then, as though she perfectly realized it would be gotten out of her anyhow, she went on: "Mr. Sharwood told me long before I met you of that point you won for some society and I felt at the time what an impossible man you would be to really trust. And I couldn't love — I mean I couldn't marry — one like that!"

Worthington looking at her keenly saw her conviction was one with a very deep root; one which could not well be reached by argument. He would try another tack.

"But, my dear Miss Levering, I think the trouble has been you have not quite understood. I have not twisted *things*, but rather, sometimes, the minds of people to my way of viewing them, which is quite another matter. Believe me, I have a code of honor of my own, which, though possibly a peculiar one, is very strict. But don't let's talk of these things, now. What I want most of all to make clear, is how much I wish you to be my wife." George Worthington paused, and then, as he took a not unyielding hand into his own, he went on.

"So much do I want you, I am willing to run far greater risks in marrying you than any you can possibly take in accepting me." He gave her time to express her surprise and then continued.

"Consider for a moment, Miss Levering, the dangers I am willing to run when I deliberately seek in marriage a girl with a marvelously sure aim, and a finger which is, to say the least, somewhat quick on the trigger! — There! — I told you I would never again allude to that incident unless there was some good reason for it. And there was one, — one vital for us both. Come!"

George Worthington held out his hands to the girl and, seeing a light, sweet as well as humorous, dawning in her eyes, he knew his most important case was won.

An Untimely Reminiscence.*

BY AMY GORDON.

"IT is a strange coincidence," the deacon said to the minister as they walked together down to the water's edge, "it is indeed a very strange coincidence that the first person you are to baptize is the son of the man who killed your father!"

The minister's foot splashed into the water as he strode forward. A thrill ran over his body as a breeze over still water and stirred his inner calm. He moved his neck within the soft collar band like a man who would breathe more freely.

"There never lived a better man than your father, and the horror of his murder lingers with me yet — " the deacon paused as if to blot out the awful memory before he continued his story.

Though without, the minister seemed calm enough; within, the words of the deacon had caused a mighty tumult. It was as if two great forces were engaged in a deadly conflict. The old paths of response sought to assert themselves, while the higher ideals of recent origin struggled to gain supremacy. It took all his power to maintain a calm exterior. Perhaps had the deacon been more observing he might have noted the failure on the minister's part to wholly suppress the outward expression of the strife within, but he was altogether engrossed with his own memories and the relating of them as he pushed himself along in the water a little in advance of the minister.

The minister's father had been a missionary to Burma, and had been killed by an angry Burmese official. Since then the Burmese official had died, leaving an only son, who was the idol of the people. The son was now old enough to fill the vacancy left by the death of his father, and a great celebration was in preparation. He had embraced the Christian faith, and to-day,

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with some other natives, was to be baptized. He was the first to be immersed, as his rank gave him precedence over the others. The little group of Christians stood apart on the bank of the river.

"I shall never forget your face," the deacon continued, "when your mother told you your father had been killed — you just stared — Oh, here we are — "

The water swept up to the knees of the minister as he followed the deacon to the place indicated for the solemn service; while swayed by the passion of the deacon's words his whole life flashed before him in a few brief pictures.

First, he saw his early childhood spent by his father's side, full of richness, beauty, and happiness — then the awful wrench to his boyhood when his father was killed. Even now the terrible grief that followed, that dried his eyes, blanched his face and gnawed its way into the very marrow of his bones, folded itself about him again with renewed force, and the thirst for revenge, the thirst that had eaten its way all through his growing years, came back! Then he remembered his vow; then, after another lapse of time, his mother's death in America; after that, his conversion — his resolution for a new life — to take up the work his father left off — this he determined to do as a test of his repentance — his forgiveness of the crime — that henceforth his work should be a living monument to his martyred father!

So he stood in the water, his head erect with a queer beating of his eyelids. Ever since his conversion he had fought every inch of the way, the long, long way, in the steady struggle to overcome all thoughts of revenge — murder! He would not allow himself to sail to Burma until he was sure he had conquered. Then a vivid picture came when he had believed he had broken the power of the desire to murder, and the thirst that had lain so close to his heart was slacked, and he was thankful! But standing there it awoke in him so strong that it sang like itching music in his ears, it quickened a rush of blood to his brain that sickened him and filled his nostrils to suffocation. The anguish of the old frenzy was coming back, holding him in terrorized suspense. Drops of sweat sprang from every pore in his body with the same impetus as the mad impulse that filled his heart

and brain, and blinded his eyes to the throng on the river's bank, and dulled his ears to the sweet voice of the singer that called the young converts to the river. The monstrous call for murder came back to him with an overwhelming desire. He managed to straighten himself up in a last struggle of his deserting will power. The horrible thirst was awake! Awake! Life was nothing!

A beautiful youth stepped into the water, and came slowly toward the minister. His rich brown skin gleamed in the sunlight, his jet black hair waved away from his brow, his white teeth shone between his smiling lips, his luminous brown eyes, uplifted, were radiant with the joy of his resignation to a Christian faith. He was clothed in white from neck to ankle.

The minister stood erect, his arms folded tight across his heaving chest, his veins swelling as he looked at the advancing, beautiful youth; but he saw only the son of the man who had killed his father and hastened the death of his mother. He turned to the deacon:

"You are sure?" he asked, hoarsely.

"Yes, quite sure. It is a great religious tragedy!"

The minister's hand reached out and grasped the slim fingers of the outstretched hand of the youth.

"Abdul!" His voice scraped and choked in his throat. His mind full of hate and his heart bursting for revenge was gaining the mastery every second. He breathed hard. He breathed harder. The voice of the singer on the shore quivered and broke under the emotion of the moment. The sun poured out its warmth and light. The crowd on the bank stood with bare, bowed heads, for Abdul was their idol.

"Abdul, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen!"

The slender body of the young Burmese sank beneath the ripple of the river's wooing. Under its disturbed surface no one saw the long, sinewy fingers of the minister as they closed about the slim throat. No one saw their cruel twist as they were buried in his flesh, nor heard the bones crack as he wrenched and wrung his victim beneath the water. No one heard the death gurgle; no one saw the death struggle nor the bright spurt of blood that

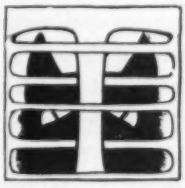
drenched the minister's dripping cuffs; no one saw the brutal heel that finished the masterly piece of work; no one knew that Abdul was dead until they saw the deacon lay him, limp and motionless, at his mother's feet, and heard the terrible shriek that filled every space about the river, over it and across it.

There was a dumb, sickening silence; then the crowd on the river bank went mad. The fury of their cry tore asunder the cloud that had suddenly obscured the sun. With one, frenzied impulse they turned to the river. But the minister — he was not there! There was not even a ripple on the shining face of the water to mark the place of the terrible deed, any more than there was a fresh pool of blood in the little church within earshot distance to show the spot where the cruel butchery of the minister's father had taken place.

The Unturned Trump.*

BY BARNES MacGREGGOR.

[This story appeared in THE BLACK CAT fourteen years ago and is reprinted by request.]



HE ferry-boat, *Rappahannock,* had an experience in the winter of 1873 that will never be forgotten by any of her passengers.

During one of her regular trips between New York and Brooklyn this boat suddenly quitted her respectable, though somewhat monotonous, career, and became a common tramp, without port or destination.

The day awoke in fog such as the oldest inhabitant had never seen. The East River was blocked with ice and soon became a shrieking bedlam of groping and bewildering craft, whose pilots could scarcely see their hands before their faces.

At half past nine the *Rappahannock* left Brooklyn, well laden with passengers, and started on her customary trip almost directly across the river — a very short and unusually easy voyage. Before even reaching the middle of the stream, however, the ice and fog had thrown her completely out of her course. Back and forth, up and down stream, the pilot vainly groped, amid the shrieking whistles, ringing of fog bells, and loud crash of ice boulders, until, in the confused clangor, he had entirely lost his bearings.

When, after long and perilous battling with ice jams and many hair-breadth escapes from collisions, he suddenly sighted the landing place on the New York side, he found it occupied by a sister boat, which had been driven there to avoid destruction. He backed out, only to be lost again, and for three hours this boat, now become a mere tramp, wandered aimlessly up and down the East River with its load of excited passengers, whose emotions

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ranged anywhere between the rage and impatience of the belated Wall Street speculator, to whom the delay might mean a loss of fifty thousand dollars, to the hysteria of a nervous little woman who had left her baby alone at home, and who begged the other helpless passengers for the love of heaven to help her set her feet once more on land.

Between these two extremes of impatience and excitement was a small proportion of passengers who remained calm, even endeavoring to while away the time by exchanging pleasantries and making wagers as to the time of their deliverance. Among these was a group of men in the cabin who, after having read and re-read the morning papers, were casting about for some other method of killing time. One suggested a game of cards.

"Cards!" laughed one of his companions in misery. "Who'd carry cards on a ferry-boat? Who, outside of a lunatic asylum, would start on a ten minutes' voyage provided with games to pass away the time?"

"Here is a euchre deck which is at your service."

The speaker, evidently a globe-trotter, drew from under the bench a traveling-bag, so much worn and embellished by tags, labels, and hieroglyphics that it resembled some old veteran just returned from the wars and still covered with surgeons' plasters. From this he produced a pack of cards and tendered it to the man who had suggested a game.

"Certainly, if you will join us; but what shall we do for a table?"

"Here is a camp-stool," said the man of the world. And in a moment four men were sitting around it, cutting for deal, which chanced to fall to the stranger.

The cards were distributed rapidly, and the dealer was about to turn the trump when a loud shriek pierced the air and a woman opposite suddenly sank fainting to the floor.

The tension among the passengers had become so great that a panic seemed imminent.

"Don't be alarmed, gentlemen; it is nothing serious," said the dealer calmly. "The lady simply caught sight of her own frightened face in the mirror, and the shock caused her to faint. It reminds me of a thrilling experience an American traveler

had while bumping through Syria. But, pardon me, the game!"

Once more he made a movement to turn the trump, when one of the party exclaimed:

"There can't be a better time or place than this for telling a thrilling experience."

"Yes," said another; "do give us some other kind of bumping than we are having here. Let's have the story before we begin the game."

The stranger leaned back, passed his cigar case, and, having lighted a weed himself, began:

"It is an unwritten law among the wild Bedouins east of the Red Sea that if an infidel traveler is attended on his journey by one of the faithful he is safe from the attacks of Mohammedan robbers. As long as the 'Frank,' as all foreigners are called, is under the protection of the Star and Crescent, the rascal's hand is stayed, and as they meet, the villain, who would otherwise show no quarter, salutes with the grave suavity of a courtier. But let that same traveler become separated from the Arab guard that he has bribed to give him safe conduct through his own bandit-infested country, and he becomes legitimate prey. He will be plundered and perhaps killed, or, worse, if the robber thinks that cruelty will extort any secrets of hidden spoil, tortured or held for ransom, with each day's delay losing a few fingers, which are forwarded to the captive's friends to signify that the rascals mean business.

"The party in which this American was traveling had been entering Syria from the south, and were progressed some twelve days from the sacred base of old Sinai. At a place called Bir-es-Sheba, on the regular caravan route to and from Mecca from the north, they heard of some interesting archeological treasures just unearthed some two days' journey to the east, and, having made the detour, the party snugly encamped by the side of a beautiful stream under the shadow of the Tubal chain of mountains.

"The treasures were vastly exaggerated, as is the custom with everything oriental, and they soon determined to turn back to the caravan route and 'bump' on up into Syria — 'bumping' being the familiar term for camel riding, and a very expressive word at

that. But on the afternoon of the first resting-day some one suggested a jaunt to a famous old well, where it was said were some very ancient tumuli. But, knowing the Bedouins to be conscientious liars, and sick of this unrewarded chase for phantom treasures, the American begged to be left behind in charge of two tents, which were pitched side by side on the bank of the stream.

"This was at last agreed upon, the whole party except himself going off on their three days' trip, leaving their comrade stretched at full length on a rug, his *narghili,* or water pipe, lighted for company.

"This oriental atmosphere, gentlemen, is a powerful drug. Do what you will to fight against it, its subtle charm holds you captive. The man succumbed to its influences and went fast asleep.

"Out of this sweet, trance-like repose he suddenly bounded into the horrible consciousness of a torturing pain in one of his hands, as though some wild beast was crunching the bones. But, as he writhed to his knees to grapple with the foe, he saw instead three swarthy, evil-faced Bedouins bending over him with ghoulish glee. One had just cut off, with a hideous dirk-knife, the first three fingers of his left hand. In an instant it flashed upon him that these were to be sent to his friends with a demand for ransom. He was correct in this supposition, for no sooner had the bleeding hand been rudely bandaged than two of his captors set out upon this mission, leaving him in care of the third, who was heavily armed.

"No one knew better than the prisoner how impossible such a ransom would be. His fellow-travelers had brought as little money into Syria as would meet their actual necessities while there. He therefore began to cast desperately about in his mind for a loophole of escape before the fellows should return with these unsatisfactory tidings, which would result, no doubt, in further mutilations.

"As his gaze swept the tent for something suggesting a plan for deliverance, he saw it had been gutted of everything except two articles, — his light silk coat, which hung upon the partition between the two tents, and the tourist's shaving mirror which it concealed. The coat had been overlooked because it was as grimy as the tent wall itself.

"In moments like this one grasps at straws. As it is said a drowning person reviews his past experiences perfectly in a brief moment, so to this man, facing desperate odds, came a desperate suggestion.

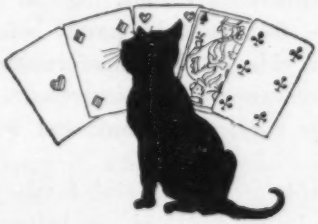
"He called loudly on a supposed protector in the adjoining tent to come to the 'window,' and prove to his captor that he was under protection of a Moslem. As he spoke he slowly drew the coat from before the mirror in front of which the sheik was standing.

"No words can express the unutterable consternation pictured upon that blazing face, livid with fright and wonder, as for the first time it saw its own awful reflection, not knowing it was its own. One instant he stood stock-still, fascinated, horrified, overwhelmed; then collapsed, just as that lady did but a moment ago, and the American quickly possessed himself of his captor's arms and was master of the situation.

"And now, gentlemen," concluded the story teller, "we will have our game."

As he spoke he again reached forward to turn the trump. There was a quickly drawn breath of horror from those who observed him, for the first three fingers of his left hand were missing.

Before he could turn the card, a savage lurch of the boat, accompanied by the creaking of timbers, announced the arrival of the *Rappahannock* at her New York slip — and the trump was never turned.



The Greatest of These.*

BY VIOLETTE KIMBALL DUNN.

HE sun streamed in through old Aunt Dosia's kitchen window, and glinted from her rows of shining pans, hanging in orderly precision on the walls. It even seemed, in some mysterious way, to radiate from Aunt Dosia herself, for her kind black face shone, too, as she moved about her work, singing a quaint old song, half under her breath.

I sat out on the back porch in the sunshine, drinking in the warmth and beauty of the June garden, blossoming fresh in the wonder of the spring, turning every now and then to the picture made by my old "Mammy", in her snowy turban and apron, typical, as she was, of all that is best in the traditions of the old Southern negro — rarely seen now-a-days, alas, but still when found, a genuine delight.

I wished, as I so often had before, that I could get a picture of her, as she stood, serenely unconscious of her artistic value, but I had long since given up the idea, for the mention of my camera, while always calling forth a pleased chuckle, was invariably followed by, "Wait des a minit, Miss Grace, please, Miss, lemme go fix up a l'il", and the result was always the same, — a prim caricature of an impossible Aunt Dosia, labeled heavily, "fixed up," a grim and defiant stare replacing the usual gentle smile on her dear old face, feet planted squarely before her, and hands held rigidly at her sides — the transformation complete! So I smothered my yearnings for the picturesque, and as I watched her with affectionate eyes, she turned, and walked to the door, dish-towel in hand.

"Honey," she said, severely, "ain' I tole you you done bin out in dat sun long 'nough? 'Deed you better come in out'n dat sun! Dat's what give my ol' Mis' — yo' Gran'ma — fever

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once, stayin' out in de sun all day. You better come on in de house!"

"Yes, but I haven't been out here all day, Aunt Dosia," I expostulated.

"Den you better come on in befo' you *do* stay dere all day," said Aunt Dosia, positively.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said I, scenting a story I already knew almost by heart, yet never tired of hearing, "I'll come in on one condition, and that is that you'll tell me the story of Grandmother Carson's fever, again."

"Go on, chile," said Aunt Dosia, eyeing me with suspicion, "go on in de house, an' sew some mo' on all dem weddin' clo'es. I know mighty well dey ain' all done yet. What's de reason yo' all de time wantin' me to tell you 'bout yo' Gran'ma? You mus' is be gwine to mek one dem book stories, ain' you?"

"I don't know," I answered, evasively, "you never can tell what you're going to make a book story out of, you know. It's liable to come from any old thing. I want to hear the story of Grandmother again, because I love it, and I love to hear you tell it. You do it so beautifully, I never get tired of it."

"Dat you cert'ny don't," said Aunt Dosia, crushingly. All the same, I knew from experience that if I could once get her started, there would flow from her old lips, smoothly, yet with all the dramatic intensity of which the true negro is capable, a story, now almost a tradition in our family, which, while I live, will never cease to thrill me with its almost supernatural beauty.

"Oh, come on, just this once, Aunt Dosia," I coaxed. "Pretty soon I'll be gone, and then you'll be sorry you didn't do everything I asked you to!" I played my trump card impulsively, and immediately regretted it, when I saw the expression of pain that crossed her dear old face.

"Dat's de truf, honey," she said, sadly. "I don' know what ol' Dosia gwine do, when her chile's gone."

"Don't you care, Aunt Dosia, cheer up," I hastened to assure her, "I've made Mother promise to bring you with her, when-

ever she comes to see me, and you shall both stay months at a time, if you will!"

Aunt Dosia fairly beamed.

"Bress de Lawd!" she exclaimed, "I might er knowed you ain' gwine forgit me! I reckon dese no 'count niggers roun' yere 'll ac' lak dey got some sense in 'em, when I cum back f'om New Yo'k, dat I do!"

"I reckon they will," I answered, diplomatically, "and *now*, Aunt Dosia, won't you tell me the story?"

"Yes, honey, ef you wants me to, but I cert'ny does hope yo' Ma won't cum out yere twel I git th'u, cause dis is bakin' day, an' I got all my bread, an' pies, an' cake to mek, an' I want 'em all done, cum lunch-time."

"Well, why don't you peel the apples for your pie, while you're telling me the story? Then you won't be wasting any time. Isn't that a good scheme?"

"Miss Grace, chile, you cert'ny is gwine 'ceed in yo' life, now you year me! I ain' never seen nobody, sence you was a li'l tiny chile, dat knowed so well all de time des 'xactly what dey wanted, an' des 'xactly how ter git it!"

With this comforting assurance, Aunt Dosia, bustling about in the pantry, soon re-appeared with a big pan of apples, which, sitting down, she gathered into her capacious lap.

"Does you des wan' to year 'bout yo' Gran'ma, or 'bout ary other thing dat happened w'en we-all was down home?"

"About Grandmother, please," I begged, snuggling into the great old chair in the corner, in anticipation of one of the best things I do — sitting pleasantly by, and watching some one else work! "I love them all, but none as well as that one. Now begin at the very beginning, and don't skip a single thing, for I shall know it, if you do."

"All right, den, honey," said Aunt Dosia, as a long, thin ribbon of apple skin began unwinding, under her skilful fingers, "I 'spec' de commencemen' was w'en Ol' Marse — yo' gr'et Gran'pa, honey — was comin' 'long de road f'om de city, one day, an' met my Mother, totin' me in her arms, an' tryin' to keep up with a lot er other slaves, dat was bein' marched in ter sell on de block. She done bin sick, an' she only had des tu'ned seben-

teen, an' she keep on fallin' behime, twel atter while de overseer cum 'long, an' tell her, 'put dat brat down by de road, an' cum 'long!' She commence cryin', an' de overseer hit her with his whip, an' des den Ol' Marse — de Lawd bress him — he cum ridin' up, on his big brack horse, an' he stop, an' as' what was de trouble? When dey tole him, he was dat mad, he up an' bought us bof, an' tuk us home, an' give us to his younges' daughter — yo' Gran'ma, honey.

"She was des 'zactly de same age as my Mother, an' 'deed, chile, she cert'ny was er beauty. You puts me in min' of her mos' all de time, and I 'spec' dat's de reason you-all loves to year 'bout her so much. Well, we-all lived right in de big house, with de quality, an' my Mother was yo' Gran'ma's maid, an' she learned how to do up li'l Mis' yaller hair — des lak de sun-light, it was, Miss Grace — an' she use ter dress her, an' tek keer of her, des lak she was a baby. An' my Mother done *love* her — honey, I don' b'leeve dere ain' nothin' 't all she wouldn' done fo' her, nothin' 't all!"

"Well, chile, de years dey kep' comin', an' de years dey kep' goin' by, twel bimeby, I was six years ol', an' big an' strong, too. I 'member des as good as ef it was yestiddy, yo' Gran'ma done tole us, one night, dat she was goin' ter marry young Marse John Livingstone — de Livingstones was quality, honey, an' dey lived on de big plantation nex' to ours — an' she say my Mother an' me could bof go 'long with her, an' we was mighty glad, kase li'l Miss was so happy.

"Chile, she cert'ny is love Marse John! Dat she did! Look lak she ain' even livin' 'cep' when he was dere. An' she'd sit all day long in de big window in her room, wif de sun a-shinin' on her yaller haid, and her gre't blue eyes starin' up de road, an' when she'd see his horse comin' roun' de ben' in de drive, an' him sittin' up so straight an' fine, look lak she done tuk hol' one dese yere 'lectric batt'ries, an' she'd jump up, an' run down to de big fron' do', an' th'ow her arms 'roun' his neck, an' she didn' keer ef anybody seen her, or no. An' seem lak Marse John, he loved li'l Mis' mo', even, den she did him.

"An' so de days went by, an' each one was happier den de las', an' den, honey, — seem lak I kin see it all now! Li'l Mis' an'

Marse John done bin out ridin' all day in de sun, an' when dey cum home dat evenin', an' got off dey horses she des fainted away, in Marse John's arms, wif her face as w'ite as a lily, an' her eyes half shut, an' starin'.

"He done toted her in, an' upstairs, an' laid her on de baid, an' den he sat down beside her, wif his face as w'ite as hers, an' hel' her han', twel de doctor cum. Well, honey, de long an' short of it was, dat yo' Gran'ma had got a fever, an' mos' f'om de firs', de doctor say 'tain' no use, li'l Mis' gwine die. Marse John use to sit 'side her day an' night, an' talk to her, des as ef she could year him. Firs' he use to beg her not to leave him, an' den he tell her nem' mine, he was comin' too, an' she wouldn' have to go alone. An' we-all knowed dat when yo' Gran'ma was daid, Marse John gwine shoot hisse'f.

"You-all might think I was too li'l to 'member, but I use to creep up an' watch her, lyin' so still, twel dey done cum, an' tuk me away. An', honey, dat ain' de wust part! De part I never kin forgit was dat dey wouldn' give my po' li'l Mis' no water! No, chile, in dem days, dey didn' give nobody wif de fever no water!"

Aunt Dosia paused, and the horror of it smote me a-fresh, and the lump in my throat rose and choked me, 'till I couldn't speak. Aunt Dosia went on, her old eyes full of tears:

"She'd lie dere all day, an' all night, an' all her po' li'l dry lips could say was 'Water, water.' Seem lak Marse John would go crazy, but de doctor done tole him ef he give her water it would kill her right away, so Marse John he'd bite his lips, an' shut his han's tight, an' sit quiet, an' w'ite, an' still. My Mother use to kneel by de baid, an' Marse John use to sit 'side it, day an' night, twel one night, des to'ds de aidge of de evenin', he fell off his chair on to de floor, f'om sittin' dere so long, an' dey tuk him in de nex' room, an' laid him down, soun' asleep. Seem lak soon as Marse John went, li'l Mis' des sort of sighed 'water,' very fain', an' tu'ned her haid over, an' her bref stop' comin'."

Here Aunt Dosia stopped, to exclaim, "Why, honey-chile, don' cry! I 'clar I ain' gwine tell you no mo'!"

"Go on, Aunt Dosia," I sobbed, "and don't mind me, and I'll try not to be such a fool."

"Well," she went on, "My Mother down by de foot of de baid, done see her l'il Mis' was daid, an' she run cryin' an' moanin' down to Ol' Marse, an den, honey, de whole house was tu'ned into a house of mo'nin'. Marse John was sleepin', lak he was daid, too, an' dey didn' wake him, des let him sleep on, all night. Dey laid yo' Gran'ma out, an' lef' my Mother to keep watch, an' chile, it makes my blood run col', even now, to 'member it! Dere lay li'l Mis', so w'ite, an' still, she look des 'xactly lak one dem picture angels, an' dere was my Mother, kneelin' 'side de baid, cryin' an' sobbin', an' dere was me, creepin' nearer, an' nearer, 'fraid to stay, an' 'fraid to go 'way.

"At las,' 'bout two o'clock in de mo'nin', it mus' have bin, my Mother stop cryin', all of a sudden, an' lif' up her haid, des lak somebody done spoke to her. Den she say to li'l Mis', 'Po, li'l Mis,' my po' li'l Mis,' dey wouldn' give you no water when you was livin', but now I'se gwine give you all you wan'. Des a minit mo', honey, an' you shall have water — des a minit mo'!'

"She crope out de room, an' when she come back, she had de big glass pitcher full of col' water in one han', an' a glass in de other. She wen' an' sat down on de side of de baid, an' lifted up yo' Gran'ma's haid, gentle, an' easy. 'Yere's yo' water, li'l Mis', drink all yo' wan'!' she kep' sayin' over an' over.

"I crope up to de baid, wif my eyes lak saucers, but she never seen me, fo' honey, w'en she open li'l Mis' lips, an' drop in de water, it wen' down her froat! An' my Mother sat dere, an' drop' in de water, twel bimeby, she could *pour* it in, an' den — Lawd Gawd, de shock mos' kill her, fo' yo' Gran'ma open her gre't blue eyes, an' said, soft, an' slow, 'Oh, the blessed water! I'm so tired,' an' laid her haid on my Mother's arm, an' wen' to sleep.

"An' all night, honey, we sat dere, an' eve'y time li'l Mis' wake up an' as' fo' water, we give it to her, an', chile, w'en Ol' Marse come in de mo'nin', wif his eyes all red, an' his face w'ite, an' sufferin', he gave a gre't cry, an' fell on his knees. His chile was alive! An' w'en my Mother done tole him what she done, he sobbed, an' say, 'I'll give you eve'ythin' I got in de worl', fo' bringin' my baby back to me.' But my Mother des cry, an' cry, an' all she could say over an' over, was 'Deed, Ol' Marse, I don'

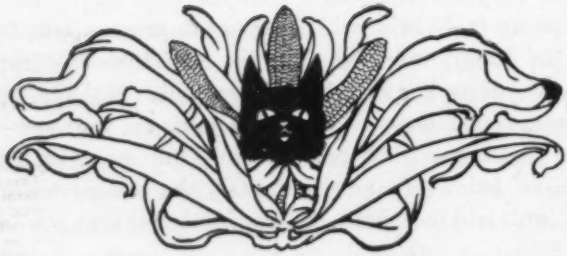
wan' nothin' 'tall 'cept never ta leave my li'l Mis'. I ain' done nothin' 'cept des love her, dat's all.' "

Aunt Dosia paused for a moment, then —

" An' dat's de en' of de story, honey," said she, with one of the swift transitions of her race, " 'cause you know yo' Gran'ma got well, an' married Marse John, er you wouldn' be yere now, makin' me tell you stories, w'en I oughter be makin' my pies! Go on upstairs, honey, lak a good chile, an' as' yo' Ma is she gwine have all apple pies, or shall I mek ary other kin'? "

I uncurled myself, and got up obediently, rubbing my eyes, to make sure I wasn't dreaming, down in that old Southern home. Then I patted Aunt Dosia's shoulder.

" Thank you very much, Aunt Dosia," I said, " and now I'll go and ask Mother about your pies." But as I went, there echoed in my heart a voice, and clearly, though faintly, it came to me, — " . . . These three, but the greatest of these is Love."



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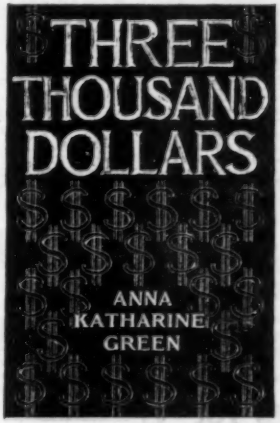

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According to the announcement just made, on all Industrial policies issued after July 1st the benefits will be increased by an amount averaging more than ten per cent., thus giving all new Industrial policyholders more insurance for less money than ever hitherto granted.

In furtherance of this liberal practice The Prudential has also made these concessions retroactive—that is applicable to similar policies issued since the beginning of the year 1907 and in force on the 1st of July of this year, thus enabling holders of old policies to share in the increased benefits granted to the new.

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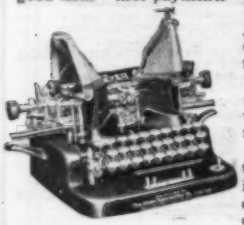

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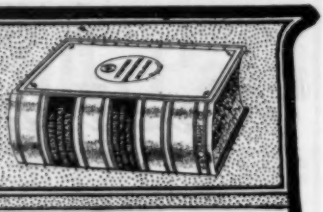

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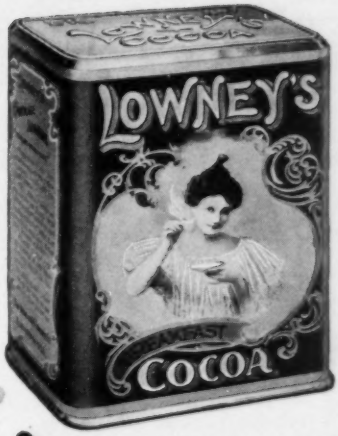

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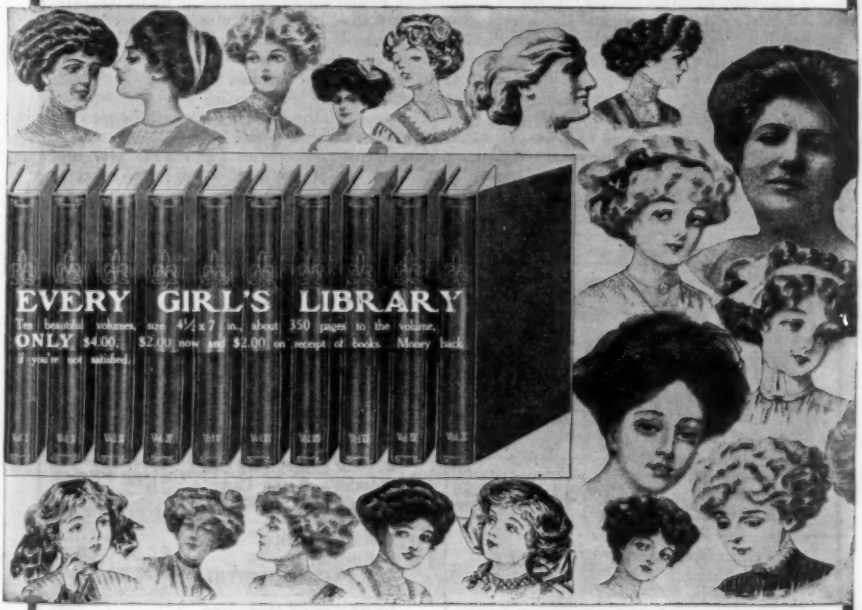
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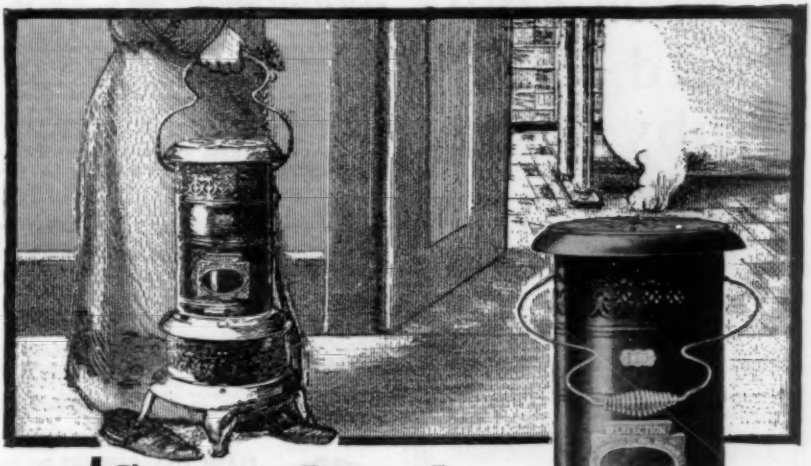

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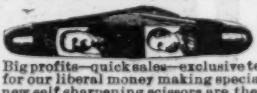

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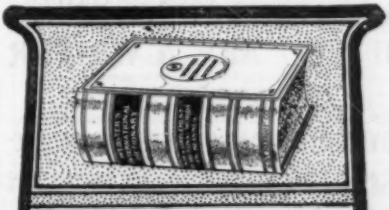

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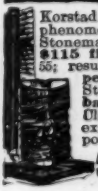

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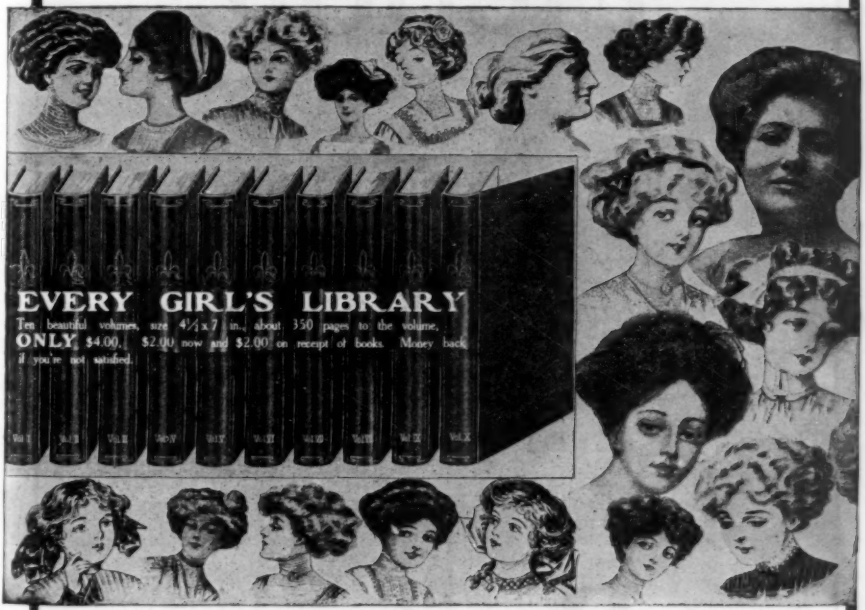
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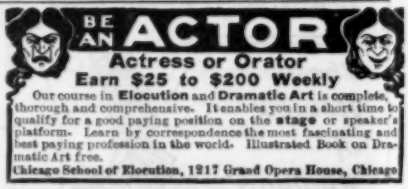

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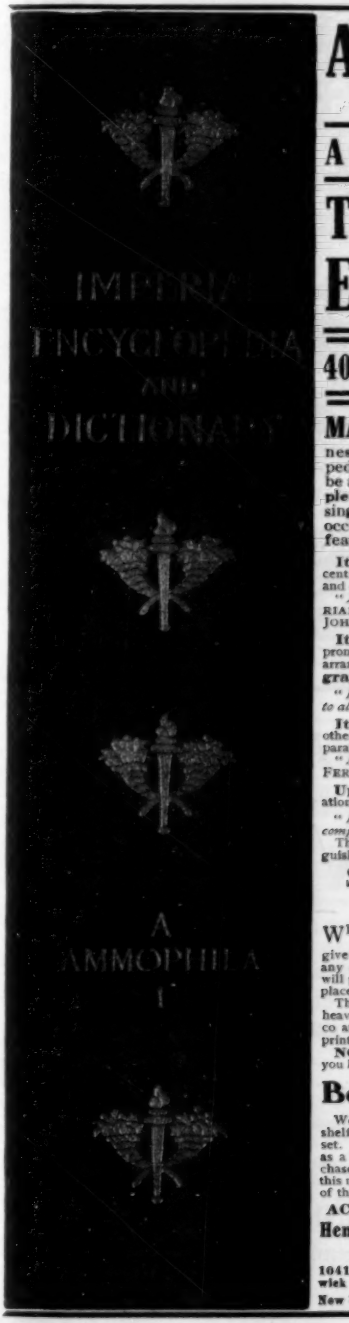

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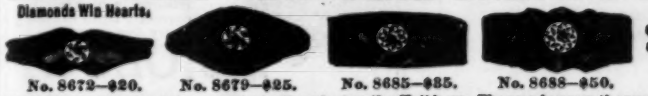

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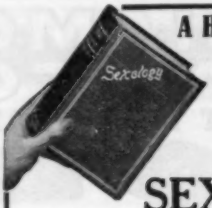

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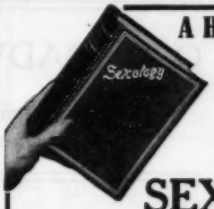

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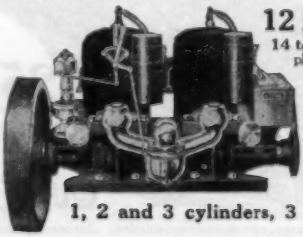

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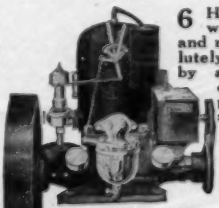

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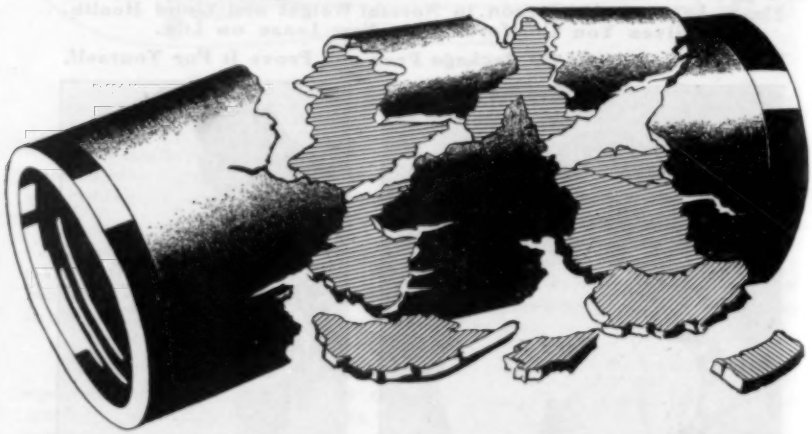

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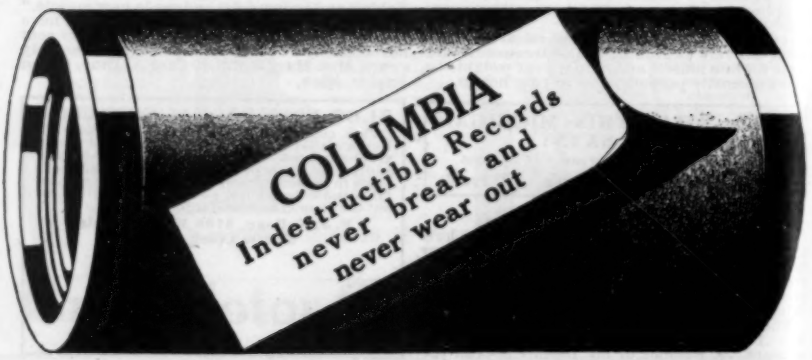

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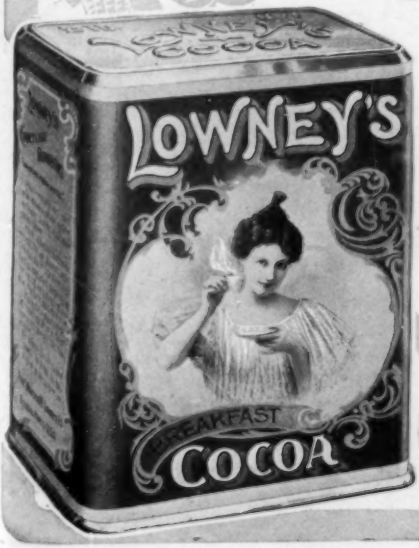

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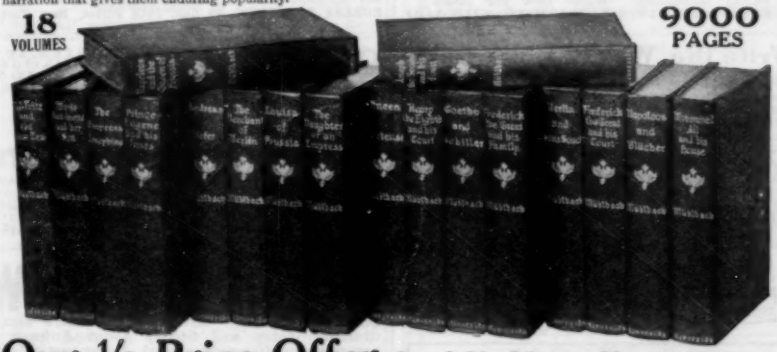

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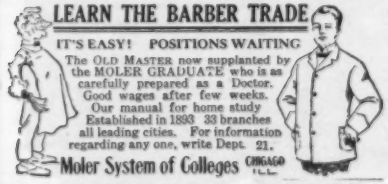

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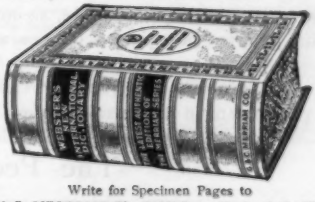

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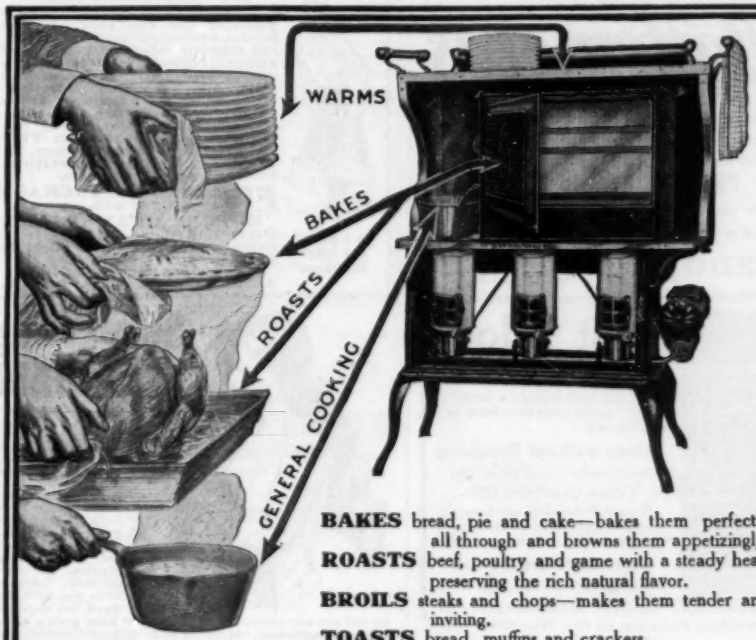

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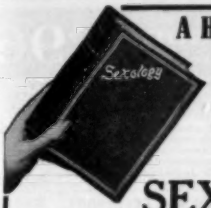

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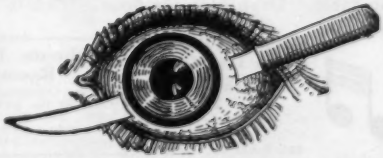

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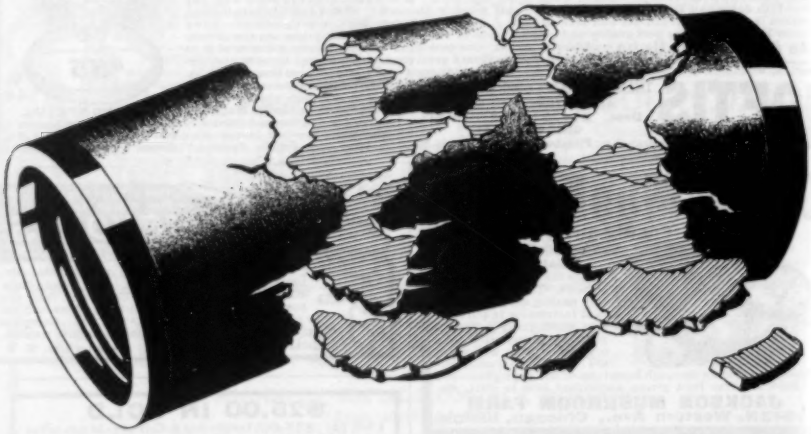

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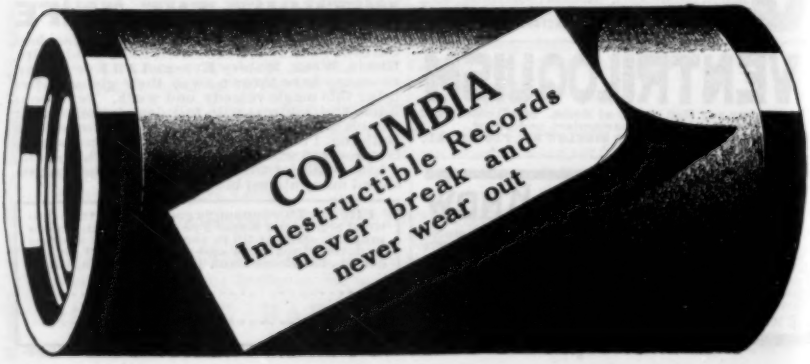

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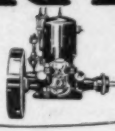

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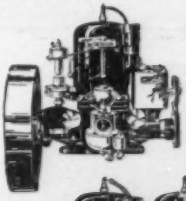

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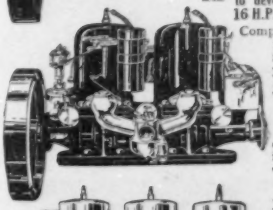

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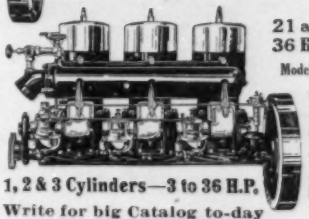

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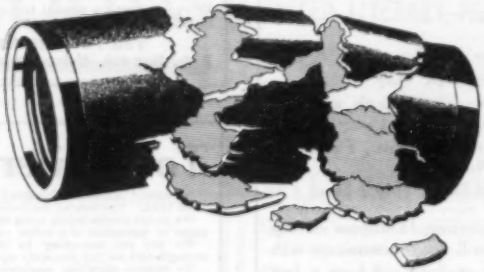

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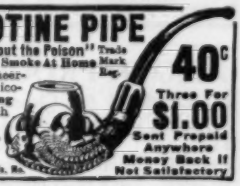

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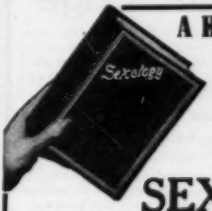

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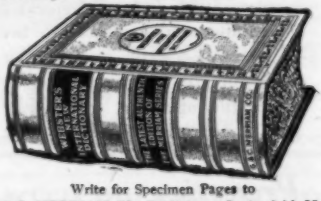

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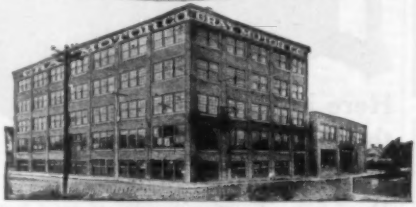

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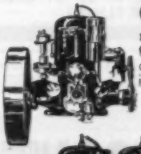

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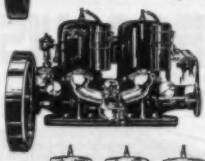

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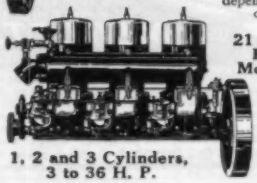

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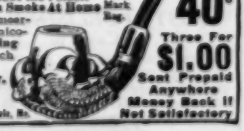

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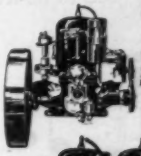

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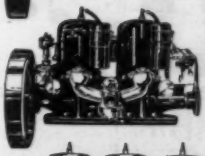

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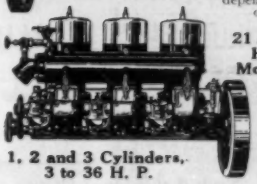

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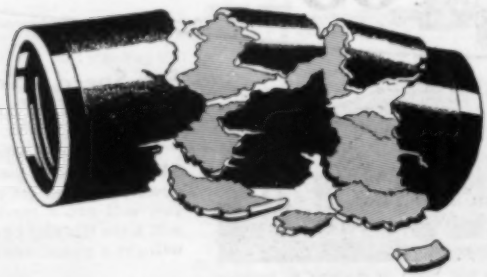

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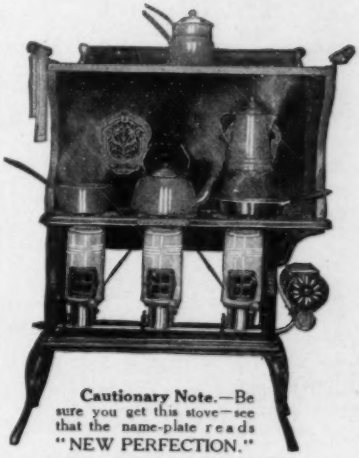

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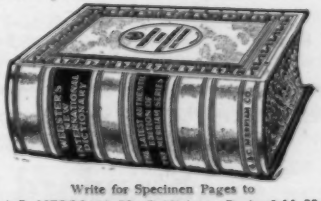

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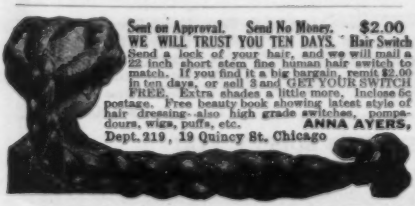

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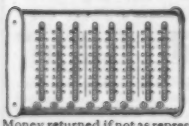

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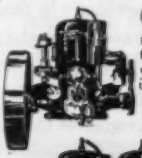

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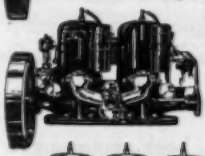

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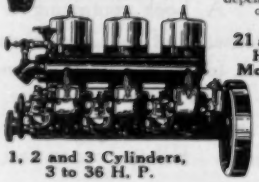

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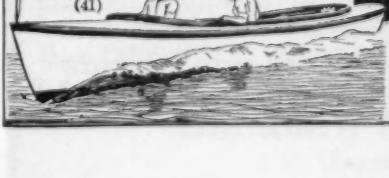

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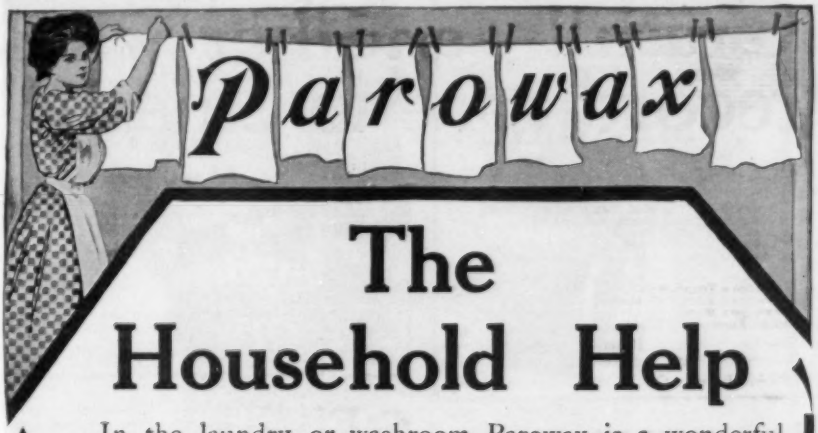

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Or let us mail one to you:—35 cents (For the 2-minute) or 50 cents (For the 4-minute), postage free, and a catalog with it. Give it the hardest possible test. Lend it to the youngsters. Toss it on the table. Drop it on the floor. Kick it across the room. Leave it in the sun. Then play it and hear a finer, clearer, purer, stronger reproduction—better music in every way—than your machine ever gave out before. Play it every day for ten years and you will still have it, good as new. Almost too good to be true? Try it! Prove it! Send for one!

Six Good Records!

Here are six splendid records, selected from the big 40-page Indestructible Record Catalog. We will mail them to you—postage free—if you mention this magazine.

We make this limited special offer so you can hear Columbia Indestructible Records on your own machine in your own home at your leisure. We know you will never buy another wearable, breakable, wax record if you will play just **one** Indestructible Record on your own machine.

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1351 Tell Mother I'll Be There (*Sacred—Mixed Quartet*)
1350 By the Light of the Silvery Moon (*Soprano Solo*)

4 Minute—50 Cents

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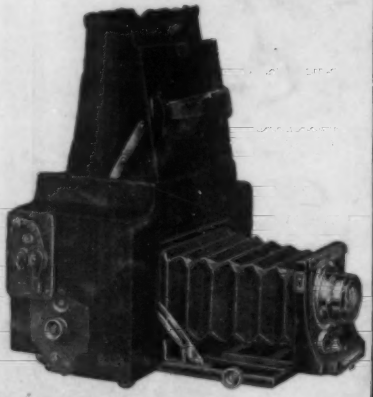

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